

# ShopSmart™

Your guide to the best deals from **ConsumerReports®**

THE TOP 10  
ISSUE

122  
great buys  
inside!

Foods you  
should always  
**BUY ON SALE**



Amazing  
**DRUGSTORE  
MAKEUP DEALS**



Guilt-free  
**SNACK CHIPS**



**STAY SAFE  
ONLINE!**

What to do now  
to stop hackers



# The best brands!

Read this before you  
buy another washer,  
dryer, TV, refrigerator,  
vacuum, or car



## Cover story

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Don't buy a dud! Check our guide to the top names in appliances, electronics, and cars. \*

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How many of the best brands do you have in your home?

Shown: Bosch Ascenta SHX3AR7[5]UC, \$700.

\* FEATURED ON OUR COVER





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39



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44



36



71



54

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**Cover photograph by** Mark Lund; prop styling: Karin Olsen; grocery bag: Michael Phillips/Getty Images.  
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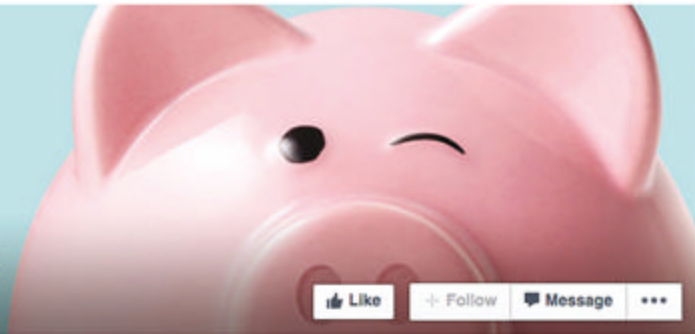
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Magazine



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ShopSmart shared a link.

Shopping this weekend? These 6 sites will save you time and money!  
<http://bit.ly/1to9Jfc>



6 great sites all bargain lovers should know

[www.shopsmart.org](http://www.shopsmart.org)

We're always on the hunt for great money-saving sites and apps, as ShopSmart readers know. And if there's one thing we love more than finding new digital bargain-hunting tools, it's revisiting some of our...

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The best time to save money on everything!  
[www.shopsmart.org](http://www.shopsmart.org)

When is the best time to buy? ShopSmart's product-research experts, who monitor prices, have found that deep discounts for some things are as regular as the seasons. Use our month-by-month shopping calendar to see when you can usually find the...





Our teams of experts care about only one thing: giving you the best info so that you can make smart choices.

## Who can you count on?

This month's cover story on the best brands nearly killed me! We spent weeks poring over tons of product test results and surveys from hundreds of thousands of consumers. Then we debated with feisty engineers, statisticians, and other experts. (It's a tough crowd here at Consumer Reports!) But it was all worth it.

This is a story that no one else can deliver. In addition to reams of data, our report is backed by teams of experts who care about only one thing: giving you the best information so that you can make smart choices. We can be 100 percent honest because companies don't pay us any money for ads or give us free stuff, as the ShopSmart promise says below.

You can find our list of the best brands on page 16. But before you shop, keep in mind that you can't buy by brand alone. Truth is, even some great companies poop out the occasional loser. And just because a brand makes one top-notch product line doesn't mean they're all winners. Samsung, for example, makes awesome TVs, but its dishwashers are the pits for reliability. So always check reviews before picking a specific model. (You can access our ratings at [ConsumerReports.org](http://ConsumerReports.org) for \$6.95 a month.)

In addition to experts, we count on consumers' opinions. And we'd like to hear more from you! Tell us about an amazing product you bought at a great price (explain what it is, where you bought it, how much you paid, and why you love it), and we might feature you in the magazine. E-mail me at [lisa.freeman@cr.consumer.org](mailto:lisa.freeman@cr.consumer.org). Also follow me on Twitter (@lisaleefree) for my favorite bargains. Can't wait to hear from you!



Lisa Lee Freeman  
Editor in Chief

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## The ShopSmart promise

**WE WILL ALWAYS TELL YOU THE TRUTH.** If we think a product is great, we'll tell you so. If it's not, we'll tell you that, too. We can tell it like it is because we are nonprofit and we don't take ads or free samples. As part of the Consumer Reports family, we spend millions of dollars a year to buy products so that we can test them in our 50 labs and at our auto test track. We also fight for laws to protect you from dangerous products and unfair sales practices. **Our mission is simple: to help you make the best choice every time.**

### LOOK FOR THESE SYMBOLS INSIDE:

 **EXPERT TESTED**  **NOT SO HOT**  **DO NOT BUY**

**ConsumerReports®**

## The advice you need before you buy



**On Sale  
NOW!**

### Essential Guide For:

- Product Ratings
- Comparing retailers
- Brand repair history
- Buying advice at your fingertips
- Best & Worst

Available at bookstores or at  
[ConsumerReports.org/books](http://ConsumerReports.org/books)

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## 5 ways to shop smarter

### 1 Save on spring travel.

Find travel deals on Google Flight Search, where you can compare flight prices in an instant. It doesn't include Southwest, though; to find the best fares on that low-cost airline, you'll have to use its own flight tracker, at [southwest.com/flight/shortcut/low-fare-search.html](https://southwest.com/flight/shortcut/low-fare-search.html). Some experts now say that there's no cheapest time to book or fly, but Hopper might help you save by timing your travel purchases. To get the best fares to Europe, for example, it's best to book six months ahead; for Caribbean trips, you should book two to four weeks in advance, according to the popular travel search site Kayak.



## 2 | Snag 'not so senior' discounts.

You only have to be 50 to get in on some great age-related discounts. AARP members (ages 50 and older) save at lots of companies, including Consumer Cellular, Michaels craft stores (10 percent every day), and some hotels and restaurants. Even if you aren't an AARP member, hotels often cut rates for visitors of a certain age: 55 at Best Western, 60 at Choice Hotels (Clarion, Comfort Inn, Quality Hotels, and others), and 65 at La Quinta. And shoppers 55 and older save 5 percent on groceries at A&P, Superfresh, and Waldbaum's on certain days and 15 percent off at Kohl's on Wednesdays.

## 3 | See more movies for less.

If you love Netflix but you also love going to movie theaters, check out MoviePass. Like Netflix, it allows you to see a bunch of flicks for one flat fee. It's \$30 to \$35 per month, allows you to see one movie each day, and works at most theaters across the country. You can even catch new releases, with no blackout dates. Sign up and find theaters near you at [moviepass.com](http://moviepass.com).

## 4 | Get more at Amazon.

Amazon Prime might seem expensive at \$99 per year. But it can be a great deal if you use it for more than the free two-day shipping. Some benefits you might not be aware of include Prime Music for free songs (with no ads!); Early Access, which lets you see select deals 30 minutes before everyone else; and unlimited photo storage. Plus, you get free e-books and streaming of movies and TV shows. Get the full scoop and sign up at [amazon.com/prime](http://amazon.com/prime).

## 5 | Don't miss those rebates.

About \$500 million in rebates go unclaimed in the U.S. each year, according to Rebate Hero, a new service that helps you manage them. Search there for rebates you may have missed, print forms if yours were lost, and shop for items that have current offers. For example, we found a \$10 rebate on a waffle maker from JCPenney, making the final price just \$15, and a \$5 rebate on \$10 worth of Energizer batteries or flashlights at Lowe's.



## New stuff we love

### DOWNY WRINKLE RELEASE PLUS

**Price** \$8 (33.8-ounce bottle)

**Why we love it** This spray-on wrinkle treatment really works! We tested it on a bunch of wrinkled fabrics, including cotton, rayon, synthetic blends, silk, wool, and corduroy. We also sprayed plain water on the fabrics for comparison. Each garment was sprayed until slightly damp. Then, following package instructions, we pulled, tugged, and smoothed each item as taut as we could make it and let it dry. The results: The wrinkles fell out of the items sprayed with Downy. (Plain water didn't work.) But don't toss out your iron yet! Downy works better on fabric blends, synthetics, and fibers such as wool and silk than on cotton. Warning: Always do a test spray in an inconspicuous spot before spraying the whole garment to make sure the product doesn't stain the material. Also do a smell test. We didn't test the product's odor-removing claim, but it definitely left its own fragrance, which you might not like.

**Where to get it** [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), select drugstores and supermarkets

AFTER

BEFORE

**SMOOTH MOVE**  
Downy lets you dewrinkle clothes without dragging out the ironing board.



## More stuff we love



### PHILIPS HD9230/26 DIGITAL AIRFRYER

**Price** \$349

**Why we love it** Our staffers raved about the fries, chicken tenders, and other tasty goodies we made in this gadget, which uses hot circulating air to fry foods using little or no oil. Despite the steep price, many of our volunteer tasters said they wanted to buy one! It nicely browned all of the foods we tried—and more evenly than in a regular oven. Just one bummer: It's small, so if you're making fries for the family, you'll have to make multiple batches.

**Where to get it** *amazon.com*, Bed Bath & Beyond

## Plus stuff you can skip



### TEMPUR-PEDIC CLOUD SUPREME MATTRESS (IN PLUSH), \$2,400

It's super-pricey, but this foam mattress flunked our back-sleeping tests.

**ShopSmart says** Save your back and a lot of money with our top-rated Serta Perfect Day iSeries Applause, \$1,075.



### MERCEDES GLA SUV, \$42,210\*

For a luxury SUV, it's not very luxurious. This Mercedes is noisy and uncomfortable. Also, its swoopy styling cuts head room and rear-view visibility.

**ShopSmart says** If you're going to spend that much on a fancy SUV, go with the cute and quiet Audi Q3, \$40,125.



It can cook two meals at once!

### RONCO READY GRILL

**Price** \$120

**Why we love it** As the infomercial claims, it can help you make fast, healthy meals. Just plop food into the basket and drop it down the slot, where it cooks on two sides without turning. In our tests, this infrared grill cooked faster than a regular oven and a convection oven, and most foods we tried browned nicely. But thicker foods cooked more evenly than thinner foods.

**Where to get it** *ronco.com*



## WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH ... The on-demand economy

### What is it?

Popular services like Airbnb and Uber are part of the so-called on-demand, or sharing, economy. Those new companies help people quickly connect with other people to get what they need. They can get cash for services provided or products and services that might otherwise be out of reach, such as transportation or access to expensive tools. In case you're not familiar, Airbnb lists people who have a spare room, a vacation home, or even a castle to rent. Uber helps you find a ride. Some services you might not know include Getaround (to borrow a car), Fon (to snag free Wi-Fi), Peerby (to share tools), Roadie (for delivering packages), and Spinlister (to rent bikes). All are free apps for Android and Apple.

### Why is it a good idea?

The services encourage renting or borrowing instead of buying, which can save money and the environment. They can be convenient; ask anyone who has used an app to get a ride when there wasn't a taxi in sight. And they can be new sources of income.

### What are the downsides?

Quality can vary; read user reviews before plunking down any money. Legal issues may also be a concern. Some locales have restrictions on opening up your home via Airbnb, for example. Uber has been accused of price gouging, or raising rates during high-demand times. And then there are safety concerns. Many services vet providers, but getting into a stranger's car or staying in a stranger's home is still risky.

## READER POLL

### Shopper confessions

WHERE DO YOU HAVE THE MOST FUN SHOPPING?\*

34.2%  
Online

21.7%



19% **T.J. maxx**  
**Marshalls**

16.8%  
Warehouse store

15.3%  
**Walmart**

13.6%  
Outlet

12.7%  
Mall

11.1%  
Dollar store

NOTE: Results are based on 1,173 responses; 13 percent said "other."

\*Respondents were able to select more than one option.

## NOW YOU KNOW

### Veggie shockers

Think you're ordering smart by picking a vegetable appetizer? Fat chance! One infamous offender, Outback Steakhouse's Bloomin' Onion, has almost 2,000 calories. See how other restaurants have fattened up veggies.\*

**CHILI'S GRILL & BAR**  
Hot Spinach  
& Artichoke Dip  
**1,440**



**CHEESECAKE FACTORY**  
Thai Lettuce Wraps  
**1,030**



**APPLEBEE'S**  
Green Bean  
Crispers  
**900**



**TEXAS ROADHOUSE**  
Fried Pickles  
**820**



**ROMANO'S MACARONI GRILL**  
Fried Zucchini  
**500**

\*Calories listed are for the entire item; not all restaurants list individual serving sizes. Information is from restaurant websites.

## SILLY STUFF

Look what we found this month!

### It's a Squirrel Toilet Tattoo

#### THE AD SAYS

Decal sticks to any standard toilet seat lid. Plastic wipes clean and can be removed with no residue.

#### SHOPSMART SAYS

That's a relief! There's nothing worse than squirrel residue on your toilet seat.



### Apache Nose Shaped Bathroom Gel Wall Liquid Soap Dispenser

#### THE AD SAYS

This Liquid Soap Dispenser could be used to hold many kinds of liquids with stickiness in bathroom.

#### SHOPSMART SAYS

What kind of sticky liquids are we talking about here?

### Night Glow Toilet Seat

#### THE AD SAYS

NIGHT GLOW Toilet Seats, glow in the dark and light your way for up to and over 8 hours per charge from any light source.

#### SHOPSMART SAYS

Beam me down, Scotty! (R.I.P., SkyMall. We hope this really isn't the end!)



## is it as GOOD as it sounds?!



### CITI DOUBLE CASH CARD

**THE CLAIM** The ad says that you can earn cash back twice. When you make a purchase you get 1 percent back, and when you pay your credit-card bill you get another 1 percent back as long as you pay at least the minimum due.

**THE CHECK** One plus one equals a very generous 2 percent. But to get the 2 percent you'll need to pay your bill in full using cash, not cash-back funds. If you buy a TV for \$500, for example, you'll get 1 percent back. But if you then pay off your \$500 bill with cash-back funds you had previously earned through the card (rather than paying with fresh cash from your checking account), you won't get the additional 1 percent. Also note that to qualify for the card, you'll probably need an excellent credit rating.

**BOTTOM LINE** This is a great offer—if you pay your bill in full every month. Unlike some cards that give you cash back only on, say, travel or gas, the Citi Double Cash Card reward applies to every purchase, with no limit on the cash you can earn. Your cash back can be redeemed for statement credit, a gift card, or a check starting at \$25. There is no annual fee, and the card offers a 0 percent annual percentage rate for the first 15 months. After that, though, the APR can be 12.99 to 22.99 percent based on your creditworthiness—another reason you'll want to pay your bills in full!



## SITE TO SEE

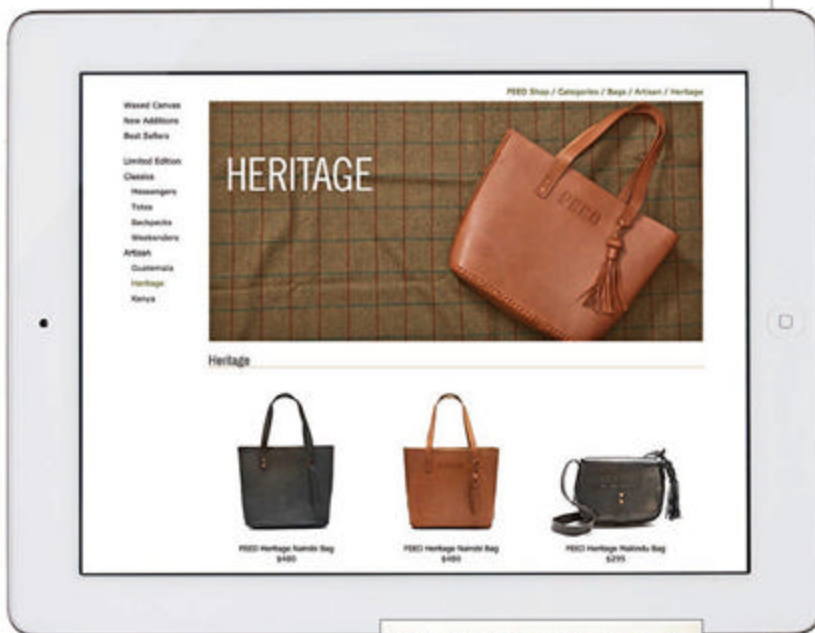
# Look good, do good

## FEEDProjects.com

**Why you have to check it out** This site is loaded with global-chic bags and other great buys that are easy to justify. In addition to being affordable, each purchase helps feed hungry people around the world. The brainchild of Lauren Bush Lauren (granddaughter of George H.W. Bush and daughter-in-law of Ralph Lauren), the site tells you exactly how each purchase helps the company's mission. For example, buying a T-shirt pays for 10 school meals. To date, FEEDProjects has provided more than 87 million meals in the U.S. and other countries through partnerships with Feeding America, UNICEF, and the World Food Programme.

**Shipping** Starts at \$5.

**Returns** 30 days from purchase.



Shown: Go-To messenger bag in clay, \$69; funds 40 school meals.



Shown: FEED 5 bracelet, \$18; funds five school meals.



Shown: Kenya Kikoy scarf in blue, \$40; funds 10 meals for children in Kenya.



Shown: Wristlet in rainbow stripe, \$20; funds 50 micronutrient packets for Guatemalan children.

Buy stuff and watch the free meals add up!

## COOL NEW APPS TO TRY



### DROPTASK

This productivity app takes the "list" out of your to-do list by showing all of your tasks in a visual way. **Works on** Android, Apple; free.



### FAVE BY SHOPSTYLE

Follow designers and fashion bloggers to create a shoppable feed full of style. **Works on** Apple; free.



### WHITE ALBUM

Finally get your pics off your phone! Snap 24 shots and this service will make you an album for \$20. **Works on** Apple; free.



### WORKFLOW

Use it to automate common tasks, such as sharing photos, calculating tips, and getting directions. **Works on** Apple; \$4.99.

# askourexperts

Q What's the deal with textured vegetable protein (TVP)? I see it a lot in foods I eat, especially vegetarian and vegan foods.

—Robert Donat, via e-mail

Textured vegetable protein, usually derived from soy flour, has been used in processed food for years. After processing, TVP resembles cooked ground beef or poultry in texture, so it's often used as a meat substitute (think veggie burgers). It absorbs spices and flavorings, so it works well in foods like casseroles, pasta sauce, and chili. And it's a source of protein, dietary fiber, and isoflavones, says Ellen Klosz, one of our food testers. But during processing, hexane, an industrial solvent, might be used to extract the oil from the soybeans, and trace amounts of residue might linger. If the food has a "USDA organic" seal, you can rest assured that there's no hexane because it's banned in organic food production. Another way to avoid hexane is to buy soy foods made from whole soybeans, which are less processed, such as tempeh, tofu, soy milk, and soy yogurt.

## OUR PANEL



Ellen Klosz  
food tester



Jeff Blyskal  
finance expert



Nikhil  
Hutheesing  
finance editor



Peter Anzalone  
recreational-  
product tester

## SAFE WAY TO PAY

Q Is shopping with Apple Pay more secure than using a credit card for purchases?

—Claudia Brookshire,  
via e-mail

Yes, says finance expert Jeff Blyskal, because Apple Pay uses the fingerprint touch security feature (found on the iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus) to authenticate user identity and authorize transactions at participating retailers. Apple Pay and other "virtual wallets" like Google Wallet or Softcard store the account information on encrypted chips on the phone and generate custom transaction codes, which can't be reused if a hacker intercepts them. By



contrast, your credit or debit card can be stolen if its unencrypted information is read. Once crooks have the number, they can make a counterfeit card. Hackers who steal your credit-card account number can do the same thing. But Apple Pay and similar virtual wallets are accepted at only about 210,000 merchant locations around the U.S. vs. 12 to 15 million that accept credit and debit cards.

## HIGHER BANK RATES

Q I have an Ally Bank account but the interest rate is low. Are there any reputable online banks that pay higher rates?

—Samuel Levine, via e-mail

Absolutely, says finance editor Nikhil Hutheesing, but whether you should change banks depends partly on how much money you plan to keep in your account. For instance, ableBanking, one of the top-paying banks according to Bankrate.com, offers a 1.02 percent yield on savings compared with Ally's 0.9 percent. That amounts

Apple Pay reads  
your fingerprints  
to prevent fraud.





**WHAT'S YOUR BEEF?** Texturized vegetable protein is a meat stand-in for foods like veggie burgers.

to \$300 more in earned interest over the first year on a \$250,000 balance—but only \$12 more on a \$10,000 balance. Consider how much it takes to open an account, and whether there's a minimum daily or monthly balance requirement. Ally has no minimum to open an account, for example; ableBanking

requires at least \$250 to open one. Bankrate gives both banks four out of five stars for financial health and stability. Before opening an account at any bank, always check the fees and other terms.

## WALK OFF THE WEIGHT

**Q I want a fitness tracker that monitors steps, calories, sleep, and heart rate. What do you suggest?**

—Colleen Gordon, via e-mail

Activity trackers have evolved rapidly since we last tested them in 2013, says Peter Anzalone, who tests fitness products. They're more attractive, sophisticated, and connected. Many current models record the four metrics you mentioned. Activity trackers are all about collecting data, and we suggest doing some research to find one that lets you view it in a way that makes sense to you. It's also important to find out

about the manufacturer's privacy policy regarding its use of your personal info. Data collected by a device and stored in the cloud can be used or sold, according to some policies, something you may object to. A few points to consider: If the device tracks calories burned, it will be at best a close estimate, but you can use the info as a relative measure of your activity. If you want real-time feedback, find a tracker that displays results without your having to sync the device. And before you buy, make sure that the tracker is compatible with the computer, smart phone, or tablet you'll be syncing it with.



### GET FREE ADVICE!

Got a question about electronics, appliances, or anything else you need to buy or already own? E-mail our experts at [ShopSmart.org/questions](mailto:ShopSmart.org/questions). Letters might be edited for space and clarity. Sorry, but we can't answer every letter.

## TESTING 1-2-3

Three questions for our sensory expert **Maxine Siegel**

### What is a sensory expert?

Sensory testing is evaluating products based on the human senses: taste, sound, touch, smell, and sight. We do things like check for fuzzy text from printers, and see how easy it is to open strollers. We've even rubbed men's faces to assess smoothness in our men's shaver tests. It can be awkward—especially that time the now-retired CEO lent us his cheek!

### What are the toughest taste tests you've ever done?

Tuna fish and chocolate. We had to drain the water out of the tuna cans, and the smell just wouldn't go away. I couldn't eat it for a long time! Tasting chocolate for

hours can get nauseating, even though we spit it out, because it's just so rich. (See page 44 for the results of our latest taste tests on chips.)

### What happens behind the scenes in your labs?

Sometimes we have to bring in things like hay and dirt to set the bar for what something should taste or smell like. So if we say something smells like dirt, we all have the same reference. Also, to avoid any potential bias, we have red lights in our lab that we can turn on to mask the color of a food. Most people who taste red Jell-O assume that it's strawberry flavored, even if it's lemon with red dye!





# The top 10 ways to ruin a hacker's day

The smartest things you can do now to prevent ID theft



Hackers have stolen the data of bazillions of shoppers, and many of us have had to deal with fraudulent charges and even identity theft. What? You're not one of them yet? As you read this article, odds are your credit- and debit-card account numbers, e-mail address, name, phone number, and dress size are being tracked and sold online on the black market. In other words, watch out! You might be next.

Victims of a data breach are almost eight times more likely to be hit by identity fraud than those who aren't targeted, according to Javelin Strategy & Research, a consulting firm in California. Yes, consumer-protection laws and embarrassed merchants usually limit your liability to little or nothing. But hackers can create lots of headaches, including bounced checks and overdraft fees, if funds are stolen from your debit-card accounts and access to the money in your accounts is disrupted until things get sorted out. Hacking isn't going away anytime soon, but you don't have to wait to be victimized. Take these steps to protect yourself.

## 1. Demand replacement cards

Hackers love to steal credit- and debit-card account numbers because they're so easy to use fraudulently. So get replacements for any cards caught in a breach; your card issuer might not automatically send you new ones. That makes it tougher for crooks, who might wait months to strike—when you've forgotten about a breach and might miss fraudulent charges on your bills.

## 2. Don't be phished

In the JPMorgan Chase hacking last fall, the bank assured everyone that no account numbers were stolen. But the crooks got names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and the type of business Chase did with each victim. That info can be used to trick you into falling for so-called phishing scams. For example, if the scammers know you use Chase Private Banking, they can send authentic-looking e-mails asking you to log on to your account and "confirm" your identity. You'll be unwittingly directed to the scammer's computer, which will steal your login info. So be on alert for impersonators and never click on links in unsolicited e-mails asking for your user name and password. If you think a message might be legit, find the real customer-service phone number and call that one, not the one in the e-mail.

## 3. Change your passwords

While you're at it, change your usernames, too. You should do it periodically because usernames and passwords could have been stolen in another breach. Create strong

passwords by using at least eight characters. Include at least one uppercase and one lowercase letter, a number, and a special character, such as #, if possible. Don't use facts from your life that might be figured out, such as a pet's name. And consider using an online password service, such as LastPass, which we've tested and recommend.

## 4. Consider a security freeze

It shuts off access to your credit history, so if a crook applies for a loan in your name, the prospective creditor is less likely to approve it. New-account fraud is relatively uncommon, but a security freeze is generally recommended if your Social Security number is stolen. You must request one from each of the big three credit bureaus. They cost \$2 to \$12 each, but they're free for victims of identity theft. Freezes can be temporarily lifted when you need to apply for credit yourself, for similar fees.

## 5. Monitor your accounts online

Don't wait for your monthly statements; check account and credit-card activity online via online banking or a mobile-banking app. Yes, last year's breach of Chase shows that Internet banking isn't hackproof. But it lets you keep an eye on your accounts. You can also set up e-mail or text alerts to watch for potentially fraudulent transactions.

## 6. Get your free credit reports

They can help you check for fraudulent new accounts. Start with the three free ones you're entitled to per year (one from each of the big credit bureaus) at [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com). Some state laws also require that the bureaus give you three more free annually. And you can get up to a dozen more free reports from each bureau by filing a 90-day fraud alert every three months if your financial info was stolen or you have a reasonable suspicion that you're about to become a victim of identity fraud. Given all of the breaches, is there anyone left who doesn't fit that description? You must request the freebies to get them.

## 7. Opt out of people-search websites

Online people-search firms collect personal info and sell it for as little as \$1 (or give it away) to anyone who wants it. That makes your name, address, age, birth date, phone number, relatives' names, and address history easily available to crooks. And that's all they need to target you for identity theft. Some people-search sites' privacy policies let you opt out and remove your info; sites that don't have an opt-out option often get their data from major brokers that do have one, so it pays to opt out at the big ones: Acxiom, Ameridex, Google, InfoUSA, Intelius, LexisNexis, PeopleFinder.com, and Spokeo. But there are more than 250 sites in this creepy business, so consider hiring an opt-out service such as DeleteMe, \$129 per year. It will monitor and opt you out at 15 major sites.

## 8. Report fraud immediately

You won't usually be held liable for losses resulting from a breach, but you must report unauthorized transactions or other theft ASAP. By law, banks have 10 days to fix unauthorized debits from a bank account but most restore stolen bank funds almost immediately.

## 9. Shut out thieves

Once hackers have your info, your smart phones and other Internet-connected devices become doors through which crooks will try to break in. Protect yourself with up-to-date antivirus, anti-spyware, and anti-phishing software, and a firewall. And stop credit bureaus from selling your name to lenders who send preapproved offers that crooks can steal at [optoutprescreen.com](http://optoutprescreen.com), or call 888-567-8688. Opting out should stop most offers, and it's free.

## 10. Skip identity-protection programs

Do it yourself! Identity-protection services can cost you \$110 to \$330 per year, but you can—and probably should—do most of what they offer yourself. And it costs little to nothing.

Cards with chips can reduce the risk of fraud, but they're not as secure as they could be.



## New chip card in your mailbox? Use it!


About 575 million new debit and credit cards will be sent out this year with embedded chips that encrypt your account info to stop hackers from creating fakes. It should reduce in-store card fraud because most of that involves counterfeit plastic. Still, cards from most issuers are not as secure as they could be. Purchases usually can be made with the chip cards using only a signature because issuers don't require personal identification numbers. Apparently, the need for a PIN inconveniences shoppers and causes "friction" that can reduce sales.

So if your chip card is lost or stolen, a thief can use it to make unauthorized purchases. And because only half of all merchants will have chip-card readers by the end of this year, chip cards also have old-fashioned, nonsecure magnetic stripes. Crooks can make unauthorized charges at non-chip-ready retailers. And stolen chip-card numbers can still be used to make online purchases. Shoppers, meanwhile, need to get up to speed on new checkout procedures. You must insert a chip card into a chip-card device where it stays until you sign your name. If you forget to remove the card, it could be stolen!










# the BEST brands



## Don't buy another thing without first checking our list!

**W**ho makes the best appliances, cars, and electronics? It's not an easy question for us to answer because, among other things, we test thousands of products each year, and it's not uncommon for the same company to make models that land at the top and near the bottom of our ratings. But we narrowed the field, using three years of test data (to see which brands have historically done better than others and tend to have higher overall scores) and owner-reliability surveys involving hundreds of thousands of subscribers. We then consulted with dozens of experts in our labs. Just keep in mind that past performance doesn't guarantee future results, of course. Also, brands that aren't called out may still make some great models. So always check product ratings and reviews before you buy anything. But our list is a good starting point, and it should help you avoid the duds!





## Washers



(front-loaders)

### BEST BRANDS



Kenmore, Maytag, and Samsung are the top-rated brands for performance; LG is among the best brands for reliability. Samsung and LG washers also stand out for style and offer optional red finishes (we love the “merlot” model on our cover)—but you’ll pay up for these features. Maytag and Kenmore washers also do OK in our performance tests.

#### Check out this model

##### SAMSUNG

**WF56H9100AG, \$1,600**

**Why we like it** Yes, it’s crazy expensive, but you can’t beat it for cleaning power and capacity—it can handle bigger loads than almost any other model we’ve tested. It’s also very energy- and water-efficient and quieter than many washers.

#### Other Smart Picks

■ **LG WM8500HVA, \$1,450**

■ **KENMORE ELITE 41073, \$1,450**

■ **MAYTAG MAXIMA XL**

**MHW8100DC, \$1,300**



**GET A LOAD OF THIS!**  
This Samsung washer (left) is stylish and saves time with its giant capacity.



(HE top-loaders)

### BEST BRANDS



Samsung makes more top-rated HE top-loaders than any other brand in our tests. They clean well, and their giant capacities can save time if you have lots of laundry. Maytag offers solid performance and proven reliability, often at a lower cost. (Note: Regular top-loaders don’t get clothes as clean as the best HE models. Those machines also use less water and have a faster spin cycle to wring more water from clothes, so you save drying time—and electricity—too.)



The Maytag has a window on the lid, so you can keep an eye on your laundry!

#### Check out this model

##### MAYTAG BRAVOS XL

**MVWB725BW, \$800**

**Why we like it** This top-loader is energy-efficient and does a very good job of getting clothes clean. And although it’s a bit smaller and slower than the Samsung below, it’s just more than half the price!

#### Another Smart Pick

■ **SAMSUNG WA56H9000AP, \$1,500**

## Dryers (electric)

### BEST BRAND



When it comes to performance and reliability, LG dryers can't be beat. The TrueSteam feature found on many models can be used to refresh and remove odors from clothing. Samsung is the only brand that comes close to LG in terms of performance, but it lags its rival in reliability.



### Check out this model LG DLEX8500V, \$1,400

**Why we like it** If you do a lot of laundry, this dryer is for you. Few other models we've tested have a bigger capacity (9 cubic feet). It's quieter than many dryers and does an excellent job of getting clothes dry, whether they're delicate lingerie or heavyweight towels and jeans. But it's available only in one color, graphite, shown above.

### Another Smart Pick

■ **SAMSUNG**  
DV50F9A8EVP, \$1,100



## TVs

### BEST BRANDS



**Panasonic**  
**SONY**



All of these brands make great TVs. But Samsung sets come out on top in our lab tests, with LG close behind. TVs have become very reliable over the years, and no brand stands out as being more reliable than others.

### Check out this model

**SAMSUNG**  
UN60HU8550, \$2,300

**Why we like it** This ultra-HD 60-inch TV has a vivid, crystal-clear picture and very good sound. Plus it's a smart TV, so you can stream your favorite shows from Netflix, Amazon, and more.

### Other Smart Picks

■ **LG 65UB9500**, \$2,700

■ **SONY BRAVIA XBR-65X900B**, \$3,800

■ **PANASONIC VIERA TC-65AX800U**, \$2,500

This TV can recommend what to watch based on your viewing habits.



## Laptops

### BEST BRAND



In addition to being one of the most reliable brands, Apple really shines in tech support, according to owner surveys. (Low-rated brands for tech support: Toshiba, Gateway, and Acer.) To be sure, the best models we test aren't all Apples—but none of them are dogs, either. All Apple laptops are solid performers. The trade-off: They're not cheap!

### Check out this model APPLE MACBOOK AIR 13-INCH MD760LL/B, \$1,000

**Why we like it** With blazing-fast performance and a battery that lasts for more than 16 hours (longer than any Windows laptop we've tested), the MacBook Air has unparalleled computing power and stamina.



## Vacuums

### BEST BRAND



Kenmore is king because of its high combined scores for performance and reliability. The brand's upright and canister vacs excel at cleaning bare floors and do a very good job on carpets. They're also good at preventing dirt they suck up from spewing back into the air. And many models are very reasonably priced. Panasonic is also a performance standout for canister vacs, and Miele canisters and Shark uprights have good reliability track records in our owner surveys.



With a telescoping hose, pet-hair brush, and crevice tool, dirt can't hide from the Kenmore Elite!



### Check out this upright model KENMORE ELITE 31150, \$350

**Why we like it** No other upright vacuum did as well in our tests as this Kenmore. The bagged upright does a very good job on floors of all kinds, especially hardwood and tile. It sucks up pet hair and has a 35-foot cord that will let you clean large rooms with ease. Just one bummer: You have to bend over to adjust the pile height.

### Another Smart Pick

■ **SHARK ROTATOR PROFESSIONAL LIFT-AWAY NV501, \$260**



### Check out this canister model KENMORE PROGRESSIVE 21614, \$300

**Why we like it** The Kenmore does a very good job of removing dirt and pet hair on carpets and an even better job on bare floors, and its onboard tools make it super-versatile. It's also great at controlling dust and dander, a plus if you have allergies or respiratory issues.

### Other Smart Picks

■ **PANASONIC  
MC-CG937, \$330**  
■ **MIELE S 8590  
MARIN, \$1,000**





## Refrigerators

(bottom-freezer\*)

### BEST BRANDS



In the popular category of bottom-freezer refrigerators, Kenmore and Samsung are performance stars that also have decent reliability track records. Three brands that didn't make the cut but perform well are Electrolux, Frigidaire, and Whirlpool; our reliability surveys show that they're more likely to break down than other brands. In the top-freezer category, Kenmore is among the more reliable brands. If you're buying a side-by-side, skip KitchenAid. It's the least reliable brand in that category.



This family-friendly Kenmore has spill-proof shelves and an alarm that sounds if doors are left open.

#### Check out this model

■ **KENMORE 7160[3], \$1,700**

**Why we like it** When it comes to maintaining an even temperature to keep food fresh, nothing can match this Kenmore three-door model. It's also super-energy-efficient and one of the quietest fridges we've tested. We also love features such as pull-out shelves and bins, digital controls, a temperature-controlled meat/deli compartment, and LED lights in the freezer.

#### Another Smart Pick

■ **SAMSUNG RF30HDEDTSR, \$3,000**



## Ranges

### BEST BRAND



Whether gas or electric, GE ranges are very reliable and perform consistently better than average overall in our tests. Plus, the ovens are spacious, so big family meals are no problem. One bummer: The highest-rated GE models are on the expensive side. Other brands to consider include LG and Samsung, which perform well in our tests. Kenmore and Frigidaire (gas), and Whirlpool (electric) are reliability champs.

This GE Café model aced our simmering, baking, and broiling tests.



### Check out this gas model GE PGS920SEFSS, \$2,800

**Why we like it** Pro-style gas ranges with large cooking surfaces, thick grates, and chunky knobs look impressive, but few perform as well as this GE slide-in. With five burners—one high-, three medium-, and one low-power—it does an excellent job of simmering, and its convection oven is great for baking.

### Other Smart Picks

- FRIGIDAIRE GALLERY FGGF3032MW, \$700
- KENMORE 74132, \$700

### Check out this electric model GE CAFE CS980STSS, \$2,800

**Why we like it** With five burners, including one that's high-powered, cooking a feast is a cinch. The radiant smoothtop even has a bridge element, so you can griddle pancakes or cook steaks. The high-capacity convection oven has a temperature probe to help ensure that food comes out perfectly done. Plus, there's a baking drawer for cooking pizza, biscuits, or other smaller foods.

### Other Smart Picks

- KENMORE 94142, \$430
- LG LRE3083SW, \$800
- SAMSUNG NE58H9970WS, \$3,600

## Dishwashers

### BEST BRAND



**BOSCH**

Bosch is the only dishwasher brand that is a standout for performance and reliability. It makes some of the quietest and most energy-efficient models you can buy, and cleaning performance is first-rate. Other brands our testers recommend include Whirlpool, which gets high marks for reliability.

**SPARKLING CLEAN**  
Hidden controls give this Bosch a sleek look.



### Check out this model BOSCH ASCENTA SHX3AR7[5]UC, \$700

**Why we like it** This stainless-steel model is really good at washing and drying (even plastics!). There's plenty of room for utensils, plus an adjustable upper rack that can make room for tall items. And it's a great value—the Ascenta outperformed dishwashers that cost hundreds of dollars more! Just one bummer: You'll have to clean the food filter manually (a yucky job).

### Another Smart Pick

- WHIRLPOOL WDT720PADM, \$500



## Automobiles

### Best splurge brand

#### BEST BRAND



Lexus sets the standard for quiet, plush, and very reliable vehicles. In addition to being luxurious, Lexus vehicles have plenty of oomph on the road. Almost all of its models score highly for owner satisfaction. Other standouts include Audi, Porsche, and BMW.

#### Check out this model

**LEXUS LS 460L, \$82,504**

**Why we like it** No other luxury car will swaddle you in such refined comfort. Owners say the Lexus is super-reliable; our testers say it rides like a dream and has plenty of room, so you and your family can travel in comfort.

#### Another Smart Pick

■ **LEXUS RX 450H, \$53,576**

**MPG MVP**  
No midsize nonhybrid sedan gets more miles per gallon.



### Best family/economy brand

#### BEST BRAND



Mazda cars are super-reliable, stylish, fuel-efficient, and fun to drive. Other top brands in this category: Toyota, Subaru, Buick, Honda, and Kia.

#### Check out this model

**MAZDA6, \$23,590**

**Why we like it** With stellar reliability, sporty handling, and a comfortable ride, you'll look forward to your daily drive. Plus, you get an outstanding 32 mpg overall. (See page 71 for more details.)

**FLASHY BUT NOT FLAKY**  
Unlike Mercedes, Lexus gives you luxury and reliability.



## BRANDS TO AVOID

Reliability is key when it comes to stuff like washers, fridges, and cars. They're high-ticket items that you rely on daily. So every year we survey consumers about the appliances, electronics, and autos they own to see which brands have the fewest and most repairs or other serious problems. These brands got worse scores than others.

### Ranges (electric)

- ELECTROLUX
- JENN-AIR
- KITCHENAID

### Ranges (gas)

- KITCHENAID
- MAYTAG

### Washers

- (front-loader)
- FRIGIDAIRE
  - GE

### Vacuums (canister)

- ELECTROLUX
- HOOVER

### Vacuums

- (upright)
- ELECTROLUX
  - MIELE
  - RICCAR
  - SIMPLICITY

### Dishwashers

- SAMSUNG

### Refrigerators

- (bottom-freezer)
- ELECTROLUX
  - FRIGIDAIRE

### Automobiles

- CHRYSLER
- DODGE
- FIAT
- JEEP
- MERCEDES-BENZ
- MINI
- SCION



# Buying Guide

## THE TOP

# 10

Which cars  
give you the  
most for your  
money?



- Projects to boost your home's value
- Foods to always buy on sale
- Amazing drugstore makeup buys
- And more!

**HOME  
& YARD**  
p. 25

**FOOD  
& DRINK**  
p. 39

**HEALTH  
& SAFETY**  
p. 49

**BEAUTY  
& FASHION**  
p. 63

**CARS  
& TECH**  
p. 71

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\*\* Between 4/1/14 and 6/30/14, the average estimated savings off MSRP presented by TrueCar Certified Dealers to users of the Consumer Reports Build & Buy Car Buying Service based on users who configured virtual vehicles and subsequently purchased a new vehicle of the same make and model listed on the certificate from Certified Dealers, was \$2,990 including applicable vehicle specific manufacturer incentives. Your actual savings may vary based on multiple factors including the vehicle you select, region, dealer, and applicable vehicle specific manufacturer incentives which are subject to change. The Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price ("MSRP") is determined by the manufacturer, and may not reflect the price at which vehicles are generally sold in the dealer's trade area as not all vehicles are sold at MSRP. Each dealer sets its own pricing. Your actual purchase price is negotiated between you and the dealer. Neither TrueCar nor Consumer Reports brokers, sells or leases motor vehicles. Service not available in Canada.



## THE TOP 10

# Best home updates starting at just \$40

Smart projects that really pay off

If you did every home-improvement project on your wish list, you'd probably end up homeless. So how do you prioritize? Go where the money is! To find out which projects give you the biggest home-value boost for the money, we surveyed more than 300 real estate pros.

Based on that survey, we created a list of high-payoff updates. In addition to adding value when it comes time to sell your home, the projects will make your home more livable while you're living in it.

Whatever you do, don't ignore repairs! Even minor problems such as a missing roof shingle or two can lead to major expenses later on. And they may be a red flag to potential buyers.

**WELCOMING COLOR** A green door harmonizes with the landscape.

## \$40 and up Paint the front door

### WHY IT PAYS OFF

It makes a great first impression and boosts your home's curb appeal. Color sends a powerful signal, so think about the impression you want to make. Blue, for example, connotes calm and serenity; black projects strength and elegance.

### HELP! WHAT IF MY DOOR IS SCRATCHED AND DENTED?

You can sand out minor scratches and fill dents with wood putty. Also scrape away any peeling paint and clean the surface with detergent and water, then scrape again if necessary. And go with our top-performing semigloss exterior paint for maximum protection.

**SMART PICK** Valspar DuraMax Semi-Gloss, \$40 per gallon



## \$50 and up Add storage

**WHY IT PAYS OFF** Four in 10 real estate pros from our survey put clutter, along with dirt and smells, on their list of top things that drag down a home's value. Investing in storage systems will keep your home tidy and running smoothly. In the kitchen, pull-out drawers, retractable trash cans, and rotating lazy Susans can enhance cabinet storage for as little as \$50. Closet organizers costing \$100 to \$200 tame wardrobes. For around the same price, freestanding cabinets and shelves help you take back the garage.

### **HELP! WHAT IF MY HOUSE IS OVERCOME WITH CLUTTER?**

Consider hiring an organizing pro (you can find one at [napo.net](http://napo.net)). Most charge about \$50 per hour—an investment you can more than earn back if your home is really disorganized. A cleanup could increase its value by \$6,000 to \$10,000, according to the pros.



A neutral color is better for resale value than a bright or unusual one.

## \$100 and up Paint high-traffic areas

**WHY IT PAYS OFF** Only 16 percent of the real estate pros we surveyed said that interior painting is critical to the sale of a home. So you don't need to spend a fortune keeping the walls pristine. But it does pay to freshen the paint in high-traffic areas, especially the kitchen and baths, where grime and mildew can build. You can paint yourself or pay a professional about \$300 per room, paint included, with added rooms costing \$200 each.

**HELP! WHAT IF I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT COLOR TO USE?** Neutral color schemes deliver the highest value because they'll allow future buyers to focus on the home's attributes. "Most people don't have the vision of what a room could look like," says Kim Parten, a real estate agent from Horseshoe Bay, Texas. "I've had homes not sell, or sell for less, because of purple bedrooms."

**SMART PICK** [Clark+Kensington Enamel interior paint, \\$32 per gallon](#)



This lightweight drill takes less than an hour to recharge.

## \$200 and up Keep up with essential repairs

**WHY IT PAYS OFF** You may lust for a new kitchen or bath, but keeping the basic structure and systems of your house in top shape should be a priority. Some repairs require immediate attention or they'll lead to serious problems down the line. That includes anything to do with water, such as a leaky toilet or shower pan in the bathroom, which can cause the floor's structure to slowly erode. If left unchecked, loose gutters and downspouts can allow water to seep into foundation walls.

**HELP! HOW DO I PRIORITIZE MAJOR REPAIRS?** Focus first on repairs that can cause immediate injury, such as a loose deck railing or an uneven front walk.

**SMART PICK** [Black & Decker LDX220SBFC cordless drill, \\$90](#)

## \$250 and up Get rid of bad smells

**WHY IT PAYS OFF** Odors can trash a home's value. Just ask any real estate agent who has tried to sell the home of a heavy smoker. You also need to be on the lookout for musty odors, which could be a sign of mildew or mold, and eliminate the source of the smell, which could be a damp carpet or wet ceiling tiles.

### HELP! WHAT IF I HAVE A MAJOR MOLD PROBLEM?

Mold outbreaks that are less than 10 square feet can be scrubbed with water and detergent. Call in a pro for larger outbreaks. It's also a good idea to air out damp parts of the home with a dehumidifier. But skip the air fresheners and scented candles, which may contain harsh chemicals that can trigger allergies, asthma, and chronic headaches.

**SMART PICK** Frigidaire FAD704DWD dehumidifier, \$250



**PUT A LID ON IT!** This toilet is water-efficient and quiet.

## \$300 and up Become more water-efficient

**WHY IT PAYS OFF** With the cost of water rising in many regions of the country, making your home more water-efficient could lower your utility bills, which will also appeal to future buyers. Replacing pre-1995 toilets with new WaterSense-qualified models can save the average family of four at least 16,000 gallons and more than \$110 per year in water bills, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Fixing leaky faucets can help you pocket an additional \$50 per year.

### HELP! WHAT IF MY LAWN IS A HUGE WATER HOG?

Consider water-smart landscaping. For example, you might reduce the size of your lawn by replacing a section of turfgrass with patio space, ground cover, or flowerbeds. Some municipalities are offering \$100 to \$200 rebates to homeowners for water-efficient landscape makeovers.

**SMART PICK** Glacier Bay N2428E toilet, \$100



## \$500 and up Tend your garden!

**WHY IT PAYS OFF** Shaggy lawns, overgrown bushes, and weed-covered garden beds can be a turnoff to your neighbors as well as to future buyers. Simply removing old growth and applying a fresh layer of mulch to garden beds can make a big difference in your home's appeal.

**HELP! WHAT IF MY LAWN HAS BALD SPOTS?** You can either reseed them or put down new sod. Once the new grass takes root, keep on top of mowing throughout the season; tall grass not only looks shabby but can also attract rodents and other vermin.



Keep grassy edges neat with a string trimmer.

BOTTOM RIGHT: ELENA ELISSEEVA/GETTY IMAGES



## \$700 and up Install a generator

**WHY IT PAYS OFF** If you've been on the fence about making this investment, remember that you might be just one severe thunderstorm away from a major power outage. Some insurance companies even offer discounts for owning a generator.

**HELP! HOW DO I KNOW WHICH TYPE TO BUY?** Though a portable generator can power your home's lights and appliances for as little as \$700, spending more on a stationary or standby generator will add more to your home's overall value. They're more reliable and are ready to switch on when the power goes off, and most models run on either propane or natural gas, which is nice because it eliminates the risks associated with storing and pouring gasoline.

**SMART PICK** Generac 6237, \$2,250

This model gives you the most for your money in the small, stationary category.



**NEAT AND SLEEK**  
Boxing in a fridge with cabinetry gives a stylish built-in look.

## \$2,200 and up Update your kitchen appliances

**WHY IT PAYS OFF** More than half of the pros we surveyed said the kitchen is one of the most important rooms to keep in good shape. Sure, granite counters are nice, but shiny appliances will also get the attention of future buyers. Savings tip: If you buy multiple appliances from one brand's line, manufacturer rebates and store discounts often apply.

**HELP! WHAT FINISH SHOULD I CHOOSE?** Stainless is still a safe bet. Updating your kitchen with the suite of appliances below could add \$2,000 to \$6,000 to your home's value. (For times when a suite may not pay, see page 38.)

### SMART PICKS

- Kenmore 13223 dishwasher, \$600
- Kenmore 78033 refrigerator, \$940
- Kenmore 74132 gas range, \$675

## \$6,000 and up Maintain the roof

**WHY IT PAYS OFF** Roofs take a beating in every season: snow in the winter, heavy spring showers, hot summer sun, and wet autumn leaves. So keeping yours in shape is a must.

### HELP! HOW DO I KNOW IF I NEED TO REPLACE MY ROOF?

Cracked, curled, and missing shingles are all signs that the roof is near its end of life. Standard three-tab asphalt shingles, which cost about \$75 per 100 square feet, are the most cost-efficient option. Including installation, a typical reroof might run as little as \$6,000. Upgrading to thicker laminated or architectural shingles adds to the cost, but it's worth the splurge; those shingles proved much stronger in our tests.

**SMART PICK** Owens Corning Berkshire Collection architectural shingles, \$225 per 100 square feet



**TOP DEAL**  
Laminated shingles look like slate for half the price.



# Hottest new hues

Trending colors to update any room

Every year, interior-design tastemakers spin the color wheel and declare the hot new shades of the moment. Paint companies are quick to follow, showcasing their “it” colors. And before long, you’re yearning for a room redo or two.

A fresh coat of paint is a fast and affordable way to update a space, but picking a shade can be tricky. “Just as clothes don’t work on everyone, your home doesn’t look great in everything,” says Eve Ashcraft, a color consultant and author of “The Right Color” (Artisan Books, 2011). That said, if you’re ready for a change, looking at trendy palettes is a good starting point, she says.

For inspiration, we’ve rounded up five stylish new hues and tapped Ashcraft and other pros for tips on how to work them into your home. Note: Paint prices vary depending on brand line. Also, we did not test all of the paints listed in our labs. For our top brands, see page 32. Keep in mind that our top-rated paint brands offer color-matching services, so you can have any color chip custom-blended at the store.



**A FINE WINE**  
Valspar Claret  
looks rich with gold  
and cream tones.

BEHR  
AWNING  
RED

BENJAMIN  
MOORE  
MAPLE  
LEAF RED

## Red wine

- Behr Awning Red S-H-180
- Valspar Claret EB28-2
- Benjamin Moore Maple Leaf Red 2084-20

Pantone’s Color of the Year, Marsala, is a robust, earthy hue that creates a lush and sophisticated look. “It has an Old World vibe reminiscent of Parisian apartments,” says Meg Caswell, DIY Network host and season six winner of HGTV’s “Design Star.”

**Where to use it** Small areas where it won’t overwhelm. Think entryways, powder rooms, and reading nooks, Caswell says. Red is thought to stimulate the senses, so if you’re feeling bold, try Marsala in a dining room.

**What it goes with** White will enliven the shade, and charcoal and black accents dial up the drama. To bring out Marsala’s warm, rustic tones, group it with other rich hues, such as forest green, gold, and mahogany.



**PINK DREAMS**  
Behr Secret Blush  
is a soothing hue  
for a bedroom.

## Pale pink

- Behr Secret Blush T15-7
- PPG Pittsburgh Paints Ballet Slipper 231-2
- Eve Ashcraft Collection for Fine Paints of Europe Nymph

The color that flatters your face can do the same for your home. For rooms, “I like a soft, airy shade of pink that’s more of a feeling than an obvious color,” Ashcraft says. “It’s very embracing.”

**Where to use it** Not just for nurseries, the barely there pastel can be a very adult choice, even when it’s the

predominant hue in a common area like the living room. “I like pale pink in bathrooms and on ceilings,” Ashcraft says. “And in old houses it can work in just about any room.”

**What it goes with** Whites and grays are the perfect foil for soft pinks, and they keep the look subtle and low-key. Ashcraft likes to temper the traditionally feminine color with more masculine ones, including brown. Or for a bolder look that’s trending now, partner soft pink with small doses of pastels and neons, such as sour apple, cobalt, and fuchsia.

PPG  
PITTSBURGH  
PAINTS  
BALLET  
SLIPPER

EVE ASHCRAFT  
COLLECTION  
FOR FINE PAINTS  
OF EUROPE  
NYMPH





**BEACHY KEEN**  
Glidden's Caribbean Sea plays well with sandy accents.



## Mediterranean blue

- Benjamin Moore Aura Santa Monica Blue 776
- Sherwin-Williams Major Blue SW 6795
- Glidden Duo Caribbean Sea GLB02

This ocean-inspired hue brings a sense of calm and peace to rooms. It makes a big statement, Caswell says, but it can absorb light, making your space feel cozier. "It's like you're being hugged by your room," she adds.

**Where to use it** Caswell loves it in window-filled living rooms, sunrooms, and even on kitchen cabinets. "Against white countertops and backsplash, blue cabinets in a high-gloss finish will really pop," she says.

**What it goes with** Bright white creates a striking contrast. "The combo is happy and preppy," Caswell says. For a resortlike feel, team it with sandy tones and a hit of another tropical hue, such as coral, turquoise, or lime.

## Burnt orange

- Benjamin Moore Bronze Tone 2166-30
- Valspar Pantone Burnt Orange PN2090
- Valspar Pantone Marmalade PN2080
- Behr Carrot Stick 240B-7

With undertones of red, paprika, or cinnamon, burnt orange evokes a roaring fire and candlelit nights, lending intimacy to any room in your home.

**Where to use it** For a bold, welcoming statement, try it in an entryway. Or use it to add refinement to libraries, home offices, and densely furnished living and dining rooms. "A big, saturated shade may feel like too much in a sparsely decorated space," Ashcraft says. If you're unsure of the color, she suggests trying it in smaller doses, say, by painting the back of a wall of bookcases.

**What it goes with** Dark woods and brown- and yellow-based shades including gold and olive combine beautifully with burnt orange. It also holds its own against cool tones—think white, gray, and soft blue. "And paired with a rich magenta and chocolate brown, it has a seductive Bohemian feel," says Susan Reid, an interior designer in Rehoboth, Mass.



**WARMING TREND** Behr Carrot Stick picks up the warmth in dark woods.





**VEG OUT**  
Valspar's  
Chopped  
Chive teams  
well with  
sunny accents  
in a kitchen.



## Olive green

- Benjamin Moore Olive Moss 2147-20
- Valspar Chopped Chive 6006-8B
- Sherwin-Williams Relentless Olive SW 6425

Olive-green interiors are back in style. Tweaked with a bit more yellow, the '70s staple looks fresh in traditional and contemporary homes, Reid says. "It's warm and organic, which people are relating to right now," she adds.

**Where to use it** Think of olive as a neutral, using it just as you would any beige or taupe shade. The relaxing tone of this green makes

it ideal as the main or accent shade for living rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens.

**What it goes with** Olive is found in vegetables, herbs, and leaves, so take your color cues from nature when decorating with it, Reid says. Reaching across the color wheel, complementary shades such as plum and eggplant give it an opulent feel, and olive's yellow base makes it a natural with teal, orange, and yellow shades. It also goes well with cool neutrals; pair it with gray for a chic and modern color combination.

BENJAMIN  
MOORE  
OLIVE MOSS

SHERWIN-  
WILLIAMS  
RELENTLESS  
OLIVE

# Top coats

The best paint picks for every room in your house



**TIME-SAVERS**  
You can skip primer with our top brands.

**C**hoosing a color is where many of us start a paint job. But you should really begin with the paint brand. If you get that wrong, the room might not look great no matter what shade you use.

Paint in a sunny kitchen, for example, can fade, and bathroom walls can end up covered in mildew. Our tests are designed to find brands that stand up to sun and moisture. We also check for gloss change over time—if the sheen dulls, it's as bad as having a stain. Keep in mind that a paint's sheen (how shiny or matte it is) should match the job. As a rule, darker rooms with fewer windows and little light need a shinier finish, such as satin, to brighten them up, and naturally bright rooms tend to look best in a light-absorbing matte finish.

To make shopping easier, we've grouped our top-performing paints into the best finishes for our room-by-room picks. And to make doing it yourself even easier, all of the listed paints are self-priming, so you can skip that step. Plus they're eco-friendly, with low or no volatile organic compounds—the noxious chemicals that make can paint smell bad and give you a headache.

## Best paints | 23 TESTED 10 SMART PICKS

### for high-traffic areas and dark rooms

- **VALSPAR RESERVE SATIN, \$44 (LOWE'S)**
- **BEHR PREMIUM PLUS ULTRA SATIN, \$34 (HOME DEPOT)**

**Why we like them** The easy-clean satin finish is ideal for any active space. Think entryways and kids' rooms. The sheen also reflects light to brighten dark spaces. Both paints were great at hiding old paint and resisting stains. Valspar's sheen didn't change with scrubbing; Behr's changed only slightly, but it left a smoother finish.

### for kitchens and dining rooms

- **BEHR MARQUEE INTERIOR SATIN, \$43 (HOME DEPOT)**
- **VALSPAR SIGNATURE SATIN, \$34 (LOWE'S)**

**Why we like them** Satin finishes are also a good match for walls that attract splatters. Our No. 1 paint, Behr Marquee, was especially great at resisting oil- and water-based stains, as well as standing up to aggressive cleaning. The budget-friendlier Valspar Satin also earned high marks in both of those categories.

### for bathrooms and trim

- **VALSPAR RESERVE SEMI-GLOSS, \$45 (LOWE'S)**
- **CLARK+KENSINGTON SEMI-GLOSS ENAMEL, \$33 (ACE HARDWARE)**
- **BEHR PREMIUM PLUS SEMI-GLOSS ENAMEL, \$29 (HOME DEPOT)**

**Why we like them** The super-shiny semi-gloss finish—the easiest to clean—can hold up to sticky fingers and bathroom moisture buildup, and it's great for highlighting woodwork. All three picks were very good at resisting mildew and stains.

### for living rooms, bedrooms, sunny rooms, and ceilings

- **CLARK+KENSINGTON FLAT ENAMEL, \$30 (ACE HARDWARE)**
- **BENJAMIN MOORE AURA MATTE, \$54 (HOME CENTERS)**
- **VALSPAR ULTRA FLAT, \$29 (LOWE'S)**

**Why we like them** A light-absorbing, subdued flat finish can be soothing in a bedroom or living room and can help tone down too-bright spaces. It's also the finish you want for ceilings. All three covered dark colors well and are durable, but Clark+Kensington left the smoothest surface and was better at resisting stains.

### NOT SO HOT

**COLOR PLACE, \$17 (WALMART)**  
This bottom-rated paint wasn't great at covering and didn't leave

a smooth finish. It lost most of its sheen after cleaning, and it didn't resist stains or mildew.

## SHOPSMART SHOPS WITH ...

Paint pro  
Rico De Paz

You don't need lots of expensive equipment to paint like a pro. Our resident paint guru, Rico De Paz, for example, prefers newspapers to plastic drop cloths. "Unlike slippery

plastic, they stay in place and absorb paint splatters, so there's less chance of tracking around a mess," he says. Here, De Paz shares more of his favorite tools and secrets for getting a first-rate paint job. Also see page 32 for the paints that aced our tests.

**7-INCH PAINT ROLLER AND COVER WITH ¼-INCH NAP**

"Home centers generally sell 9-inch rollers, so I buy these smaller ones online," De Paz says. They're easier to control and handle when applying paint, and fit a standard pan better so that you don't get a lot of paint collecting on the side, which can drip. The short nap minimizes paint spatter better than fluffier types.

Shown: 7-inch metal wire-cage roller with nonslip plastic handle, \$6.50, and Purdy 140662071 White Dove 7-inch, ¼-nap roller cover, \$4.50, [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

**PAINT-TRAY LINER**

It makes cleaning up and changing paint colors easier because it's disposable.

Shown: Blue Hawk paint-tray liner, \$1, [lowes.com](http://lowes.com).

**Metal putty knife**

It's good for more than applying Spackle; it's a great cleaning tool. Use it to scrape off bumps or raised spots on a wall, say, from nail hole edges or dried-on paint.

Shown: Stanley nylon handle stiff-blade putty knife, \$8, [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

**POUR SPOUT**

It keeps paint from running down the side of the can and keeps the rim clean, so the lid won't stick when the can is closed.

Shown: Shur-Line 06100c gallon-can paint pourer, \$4.50, [sears.com](http://sears.com).

**LIGHTWEIGHT, FAST-DRYING SPACKLING COMPOUND**

If you have lots of little nail holes, this stuff will let you fill and paint right over them as you go. Use your finger to rub a tiny dab of spackle into the nail holes. "You're more likely to glob on too much with a putty knife and leave a lump, and it won't be even," De Paz says. For larger cracks, hire a plasterer.

Shown: Dap 12141 Fast 'N Final Lightweight Spackling, \$5.20, [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).



**SCRUB SPONGE**

Start your paint job with a clean wall. De Paz uses a scrub sponge and a diluted solution of a nonsudsing cleaner like Spic and Span. "Suds will make the wall too slick to hold the paint," he says. "A scrub sponge will clean and sand small imperfections in the wall and rough up the surface for better adhesion."

Shown: Scotch-Brite heavy-duty scrub sponges, \$3 for three, [drugstore.com](http://drugstore.com).

**Paint edger**

This pad with guide wheels makes cutting in along ceilings and trim fast and easy. To keep the wheels clean, run the roller on the pad a few times to load it up. "Don't dip it into the paint," De Paz says.

Shown: Shur-Line 500 paint edger, \$4.90, [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

**Plastic wrap**

For next-day touch-ups or second coats, don't wash the brush. "Just wrap it tightly in plastic wrap until you need it," De Paz says. "You can also use it to cover the roller and tray. It should keep overnight."

Shown: Plastic wrap, sold at supermarkets.

**PAINTER'S TAPE**

Use painter's tape in places where you can't use an edger, such as around a circular light fixture. FrogTape Delicate Surface was the best in our tests. "It kept the line and didn't damage the underlying surface, even after leaving it on for 14 days," De Paz says. "So you don't have to peel it off between coats."

Shown: FrogTape 280222 delicate-surface painting tape, 1.88-inch by 60-yard roll, \$9, [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

**SYNTHETIC BRISTLE SASH BRUSH**

"Go with nylon/poly, not natural bristles with water-based paint," De Paz advises. "Natural bristle is like hair; when it gets wet, it has no body, and a floppy brush can't spread paint well." The angled brush is better especially in tight corners, but a long or short handle is your choice. "In the store, hold each in your hand to see which gives you better control."

Shown: Purdy 2-inch XL angled sash brush, \$11.60, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com), and Wooster 2-inch polyester-nylon blend angle sash paintbrush, \$10, [lowes.com](http://lowes.com).

# Speed things up!

Cook and clean faster with these tips and tools

**C**hores like laundry and dinner prep are probably chewing up more of your day than they need to. That's what we learned when our testers recently timed hundreds of appliances in six categories, including washers, dishwashers, ovens, and coffeemakers. Pick the right machines, and you can cut laundry time by a third and churn out clean dishes in less than half the time it takes with slower models we tested. The six appliances shown here are among the fastest; the "time saved" info is the difference between the speediest models and the slowest ones. But you don't necessarily have to shell out big bucks for a new appliance to speed things up. See our testers' tips for making just about any old machine get the job done faster.

The Blomberg's quick cycle takes just 35 minutes!

## Dishwasher

<b>FASTEST</b> 85 minutes <b>BLOMBERG</b> DWT54100SS, \$750	<b>VS.</b>	<b>SLOWEST</b> 205 minutes <b>VIKING</b> PROFESSIONAL VDB451SS, \$1,950
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**TIME SAVED**  
120 minutes

The top-rated Blomberg is the fastest dishwasher we've tested and is also tops in energy efficiency. The normal cycle takes 85 minutes, and the quick cycle, designed for lightly soiled dishes, takes a mere 35 minutes. The slowpoke Viking mentioned at left takes more than 3 hours using the normal cycle.

### Speed up your machine

Before turning on any dishwasher, run your kitchen faucet until the water is hot. That's faster than having the dishwasher heat up the water.

## Top-loading washer

<b>FASTEST</b> 75 minutes <b>LG</b> WT5680HVA, \$1,200	<b>VS.</b>	<b>SLOWEST</b> 115 minutes <b>FRIGIDAIRE</b> AFFINITY FAHE1011MW, \$550
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**TIME SAVED**  
40 minutes

Normal wash time for the LG is just an hour and 15 minutes on the heavy-soil setting, and the superfast TurboWash cycle shaves off 20 minutes without sacrificing performance. That can save you a full hour over slower machines such as the Frigidaire mentioned above. The LG also has a jumbo drum that can wash more stuff—up to 26 pounds (other machines we tested hold as little as 15 pounds)—in fewer loads. And it's one of the few top-loaders that got our top scores for cleaning power. The Frigidaire is also great at cleaning, but it doesn't hold as much stuff, is tough on clothes, and uses more water and energy.

**Speed up your machine** Always measure your detergent. Using too much can prolong the rinse cycle.





## Front-loading washer

**FASTEST**  
80 minutes  
**SAMSUNG**  
WF45H6300AG,  
\$1,050

**VS.**

**SLOWEST**  
110 minutes  
**KENMORE**  
41382,  
\$800

**TIME SAVED**  
30 minutes

The Samsung takes 80 minutes on the heavy-soil setting, but the SuperSpeed option shortens that by about 20 minutes for the same great cleaning results. So you could save up to 50 minutes. Like most front-loaders, it spins out more water than top-loaders, so dryer time is also shortened. **Speed up your machine** Use the longer heavy-soil setting only for the dirtiest stuff.

## Cooktop

**FASTEST**  
8 minutes  
to bring a  
large pot of  
water to a boil  
**GE PROFILE**  
PHP900DMBB  
INDUCTION  
SMOOTHTOP,  
\$1,400

**VS.**

**SLOWEST**  
13 minutes  
**GE**  
PP912SMSS  
ELECTRIC  
SMOOTHTOP,  
\$800

**TIME SAVED**  
5 minutes



**PASTA PRONTO!**  
An induction  
cooktop such as  
this GE model boils  
water superfast.

Saving 5 minutes might not sound like much, but when you're trying to get dinner on the table and you're waiting for the pasta water to boil, every minute counts. The GE model shown below is superfast, thanks to induction technology. But it requires magnetic cookware: Look for induction-ready stainless, cast iron, or enameled steel. Though slower, the other GE mentioned at left is a lot cheaper and is still very good at simmering and high-heat cooking.

**Speed up your machine** No matter what cooktop you use, match the pot size to the burner size. Heat and energy are wasted when the burner is bigger than the pot.



## Wall oven

**FASTEST**  
10½ minutes  
to preheat to 350°F  
**WHIRLPOOL**  
WOS92ECOAH,  
\$1,500

**VS.**

**SLOWEST**  
18 minutes  
**FRIGIDAIRE**  
FFEW3025PW,  
\$850

**TIME SAVED**  
7½ minutes

In addition to being quicker to preheat than the Frigidaire, the Whirlpool shown at left is better at baking and broiling. Its convection feature can also speed up cooking time, though the Frigidaire's interior is roomier.

**Speed up your machine** Skip preheating any oven when you're cooking foods that take an hour or longer to cook, such as roasts and casseroles. It's not necessary.

## Pod coffeemaker

**FASTEST**  
1½ minutes  
**DELONGHI**  
NESCAFÉ  
DOLCE GUSTO  
GENIO  
EDG455T, \$130

**VS.**

**SLOWEST**  
4¼ minutes  
**BUNN**  
MYCAFE MCU  
\$160\*

**TIME SAVED**  
3 minutes

All pod machines are speedy, but when you need that shot of caffeine ASAP, it's tough to beat the DeLonghi. The trade-off: Traditional drip machines take longer, but they make a better cup of joe, according to our expert tasters.

**Speed up your machine** Clean your coffeemaker regularly. Mineral buildup and coffee residue slow brewing; they can also affect taste.



\*The Hamilton Beach FlexBrew 49995, \$50, also took 4¼ minutes.



# Home news

## Great design finds under \$25

Going for the green in honor of Earth Day can be both stylish and sustainable. We rounded up some eco-friendly and budget-friendly accessories that can help you add a touch of spring to your home.

**Just add flowers!**

Shown: Aida tall vase made from recycled glass, \$15 each, [crateandbarrel.com](http://crateandbarrel.com).



**This rug is made out of plastic bottles!**

Shown: Reversible indoor-outdoor rug, \$20, [worldmarket.com](http://worldmarket.com).



**Store your magazines in a basket created from old magazines.**

Shown: Petal paper bowl, \$12, [tenthousandvillages.com](http://tenthousandvillages.com).

**It's 90 percent recycled paper.**

Shown: Kvittra storage box, \$8, [ikea.com](http://ikea.com).



## lab update

### HOW TO GET 2 WASHERS IN 1

Wouldn't it be great if you could do two loads of laundry at the same time—delicates in one and regular stuff in another? It would be a huge time-saver, so we can't wait to get the new LG Twin Wash system into our labs. Spotted at a recent trade show, the pedestal drawer conceals a top-loading miniwasher that can fit under any LG front-loader. Use the miniwasher, about \$500, on its own to clean a few items, and/or run a bigger load in the regular washer. Bonus: The pedestal raises the machine to a height that makes loading and unloading laundry easier on the back. The maker says Twin Wash will hit stores this spring; we'll report the results of our tests in a future issue. As we mention in our cover story starting on page 16, LG is a top washer brand. If you want the Twin Wash system, you can start by buying the high-scoring LG WM8500HVA model, \$1,450, which the company says will work with the miniwasher.

## Should you go for suite deals?

If you're looking to replace kitchen appliances, buying a matched set from one brand creates a seamless look and makes shopping easy. Plus retailers often offer discounts for buying multiples. But there's a catch, according to our experts. Not every appliance in a suite may be a winner. For example, the \$11,050 Samsung Chef Collection, the latest kitchen suite we've tested, is sleek and stylish, but it has some weak links. The range and fridge are top-notch and loaded with nice features. The induction range can convert from a single to a double oven that can cook at different temperatures, and one of the fridge's bottom freezers converts to a fridge chamber. But the microwave was noisy and not great at venting. And Samsung dishwashers were the most repair-prone in our recent reliability survey.

**ShopSmart says** For the best appliances, you might have to mix brands. (For lists of all of our recommended appliances, subscribe to [ConsumerReports.org](http://ConsumerReports.org) for \$6.95 per month.) When mixing brands, keep finishes the same. You can also cover your fridge and dishwasher with panels that match your cabinets.



Put a second load in here!

## THE TOP 10

# Groceries you should always buy on sale

Cut your food bills—without clipping coupons!

## CHEAP TRICK

Track prices so that you can spot a good deal.

**Y**ou don't need a crystal ball to know when it's time to load up on certain groceries.

By being in the know about supermarket sales cycles—which usually occur every 12 weeks for many major food categories—and other special discounts (see “What to Buy When,” on page 41), you can stock up and cut your bills in half without clipping another coupon, says Teri Gault, founder and CEO of The Grocery Game. But if you do use coupons, Gault says that based on her calculations you can boost your savings to 67 percent, on average. The secret? Buy and store about three months' worth of your family's favorites so that you never have to pay full price. Turn the page to find out how to maximize your savings with smart timing strategies in 10 food categories.





# Slash the cost of expensive stuff

## 1. MEAT AND POULTRY

They're usually the priciest items on a grocery list but can last for months in the freezer. So stock up on birds, cutlets, roasts, ribs, steaks, and chops when you see deals of at least 50 percent off. Gault freezes meal-sized portions for freshness and to make cooking easier. Whole birds and roasts can be frozen up to a year, and chops, steaks, and chicken parts will be good for about nine months. Sliced deli meats are also freezable for one to two months when well-sealed; so are rotisserie chickens—up to four months.

## 2. CHEESE

When you see sales of cheese up to 57 percent off, snatch up your favorites. Unopened blocks of hard cheeses such as cheddar and Parmesan can last six months in the fridge; sliced and shredded cheeses can be frozen up to four months. For the lowest price per ounce, buy cheese in blocks and shred it yourself, then freeze. You can thaw any frozen cheese in the fridge when you're ready to use it, but keep in mind that freezing can change the texture; it might be crumbly and better used for cooking than snacking.

Unopened cheese can last six months.

## 3. GOURMET OILS AND FOODS

When you spot a good markdown on pricey artisanal oils, usually 44 to 62 percent off, jump on it. But resist the urge to buy out the shelf. You want to get only what you can use within—at most—two years for a good olive oil. Vegetable oil and some nut oils have even shorter shelf lives; check their “best buy” dates and purchase based on how much you'll use them. Pantry storage is best for most oils. (See page 42 for more storage tips.) But you might eke out a few more months by refrigerating unopened containers. If you're buying certain gourmet ingredients for a favorite recipe—say artichoke hearts, capers, or olives—it's smart to stash those preserved items when prices are slashed. They'll keep, unopened, a minimum of two years—and up to five—in the pantry.

## 4. NUTS

The full price for almonds, pecans, walnuts, and other nuts can be, well, nuts. When you find a deal (about half off), stash what you won't eat right away in the freezer for up to a year in the unopened container. Or seal bulk purchases in heavy-duty zipper-top or vacuum-sealed plastic bags.

# Scope out rare deals

## 5. BAKING SUPPLIES

Most baking items are marked down around the holidays, often steeply. And a once-a-year sale is really all you need for most ingredients; some, like sugar, never go bad. Cool, dry, airtight storage is a must to preserve quality, and you can freeze anything that doesn't contain oil or a leavening agent to extend its life longer.

## 6. FANCY CRACKERS

They're another seasonal find. Discounts are often tied to the holidays, at about 45 percent off. Plan ahead with your purchases so that you can offer guests a gourmet snack anytime. Crackers usually have a shelf life in the pantry of six to nine months, and they can stay crisp for up to a year if kept airtight in the freezer.

## 7. MAPLE SYRUP

Sales are rare on the real stuff, and the biggest discount you'll see is about 40 percent. It's good for up to a year unopened in the fridge, but it can be decanted into airtight glass containers and frozen indefinitely.





## Stockpile family favorites

### 8. BREAD, CEREAL, AND GRANOLA BARS

There are often great discounts in this category that can top 50 percent, which is why it's a shame to replenish family favorites at full price. Sealed boxes of cereal and granola bars will keep in the pantry for at least a year. The bread aisle usually has buy-one-get-one-free offers, so freeze spare loaves for three months' worth of sandwiches. To avoid freezer-induced dryness, work the air out of the bag before freezing.

### 9. FROZEN VEGGIES

Even at regular prices, frozen veggies can be a lot cheaper than fresh versions, especially in the off-season. But when you catch a sale, stock up for up to 50 percent off. The quality of bagged vegetables diminishes more quickly than boxed varieties, but you'll get at least a couple of months' storage time with each type.

### 10. CONDIMENTS AND PASTA SAUCE

You'll see the best sales on mayo, ketchup, and salad dressings—40 to 60 percent off—during summer months because of picnics and barbecues for Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Labor Day. Unopened containers last at least six months. When you find those staples on sale with coupons, usually during winter months, you can get up to 75 percent off. Tomato products last up to 18 months. Also look for soups on sale during the cold months. Low-acidity, non-tomato-based soups can last up to five years if the cans aren't dented.



ILLUSTRATIONS: GWENDA KACZOR

## What to buy when

Food sales are often seasonal and may even depend on geography. "You may see soup on sale in New Jersey every 12 weeks," says Teri Gault of The Grocery Game. "But if you live in Arizona, where there could be 16 hot weeks in the summer, you may not see as many sale cycles on soup." As a general guide, watch for these deals:

<b>January</b> <b>Diet food</b> Look for discounts on snack bars, shakes, and more. <b>Hot tea</b> Stash unopened boxes in the pantry for two to three years.	<b>February</b> <b>Valentine's Day goodies</b> Steaks, shrimp, and lobster go on sale. <b>Chinese New Year supplies</b> Shop for ethnic specialties at a discount. <b>Canned food</b> Stock up on soups, veggies, and more.	<b>March</b> <b>Frozen food</b> From microwave meals to fruits and vegetables, you'll see lots of sales, plus coupons.
<b>April</b> <b>Easter staples</b> Lamb, ham, and eggs headline store circulars. <b>Passover foods</b> Macaroons, matzo, and gefilte fish go on sale. <b>Cancer Awareness Month deals</b> Find sales on healthy low-fat, whole-grain foods.	<b>May</b> <b>Barbecue season supplies</b> Ground beef, hot dogs, condiments, and anything else picnic-oriented will be on sale through Labor Day.	<b>June</b> <b>Dairy</b> You'll see price cuts on milk, cheese, and ice cream, and Popsicles and other nondairy frosty treats.
<b>July</b> <b>Barbecue specials</b> Sales on meats and poultry abound. Also look for discounts on canned favorites like baked beans. <b>Ice cream</b> You can still catch sweet deals.	<b>August</b> <b>Peak produce season buys</b> It's a great time to start stocking up on low-priced fresh fruits and veggies for preserving and freezing.	<b>September</b> <b>Breakfast favorites</b> From cereals to breakfast bars to frozen sausage-and-egg sandwiches, look for discounts on old favorites as well as new products.
<b>October</b> <b>Pizza and pasta</b> Look for slashed prices on Italian favorites in the freezer and in grocery aisles. Also, vineyards are shipping their latest vintages, so good deals can be found on older vintage bottles.	<b>November</b> <b>Post-Halloween deals</b> Clean up in the clearance candy aisle. <b>Thanksgiving finds</b> Grab some of the lowest prices on meat (especially poultry), plus sales on canned veggies, stuffing mix, cream soups, and baking products.	<b>December</b> <b>Holiday essentials</b> The baking aisle should have many discounted ingredients, but you'll also find the lowest prices of the year on frozen pies. And keep an eye out for pre-New Year's Champagne sales.

# Oils that add flavor

Make your salads and other dishes more delicious

live and canola are probably your go-to oils for everyday cooking, but what about all of those specialty oils made from nuts, seeds, and fruit? Like herbs and spices, they're flavor boosters that you can use in salad dressings, baked goods, soups, and many other dishes, says Sarah Huck, owner of the Kos Kaffe, a Brooklyn, N.Y., coffeehouse and co-author of "Fruitful: Four Seasons of Fresh Fruit Recipes" (Running Press, 2014).

Specialty oils may also have health benefits: Most of those listed at right—especially avocado and hazelnut—are rich in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats. Walnut oil is a rare plant source of inflammation-fighting omega-3 fatty acids, and sesame oil is rich in lignan, which may help lower cholesterol.

Just keep in mind that specialty oils tolerate heat differently. Oils like avocado, pecan, and macadamia have higher smoke points, so you can use them for frying. Others, like walnut, pumpkin seed, and toasted sesame, have lower smoke points, so they're best for low-heat dishes or to top salads and other uncooked foods. Also keep in mind that the more fragile nut and toasted oils (pumpkin seed, sesame, pecan, walnut) can go rancid fast, so once opened, store them in the fridge.

Avocado oil is loaded with heart-healthy fats.



## Avocado oil

**THE TASTE** It has a subtle avocado flavor with a hint of butter.

**BEST FOR** Salad dressings, marinades, and all kinds of cooking. With its high smoke point, it can handle searing, grilling, and frying, though it's a bit too pricey to make it a replacement for your usual frying oil.

**TRY THIS!** Huck mixes avocado oil with puréed basil leaves to drizzle over sliced tomatoes. Its buttery flavor is also a natural wherever butter goes—say, on corn on the cob or mashed potatoes.

## Macadamia-nut oil

**THE TASTE** It's delicate but distinctly buttery.

**BEST FOR** Salad dressings, marinades, and high-heat roasting and frying. The buttery flavor is great for bread dipping and for sauces, too. It's pricey (about \$16 for 16 ounces), but a little goes a long way.

**TRY THIS!** Use it in piecrusts calling for regular oil, and for a luxe touch, add some finely ground macadamia nuts to the dough. Huck also suggests adding it to mango salsa to spoon over fish.

## Toasted pumpkin-seed oil

**THE TASTE** This oil is sweet and mellow, with deep roasted-nut overtones.

**BEST FOR** Finishing sauces—sweet and savory—and salad dressings, especially vinaigrettes.

**TRY THIS!** Swirl a little pumpkin-seed oil on vanilla ice cream, says Huck, who also drizzles it on oatmeal with honey and chopped apple.





Try this  
on roasted  
veggies!

Coconut oil is  
solid at room  
temperature.

### Pecan oil

**THE TASTE** Regular pecan oil has a subtle nutty flavor with a hint of butter, and the roasted kind has more browned-butter depth.

**BEST FOR** Baking, because of its buttery flavor. It can also be used for high- and low-heat cooking, as well as salad dressings and marinades.

**TRY THIS!** It takes fried chicken to a whole new level. But because it's expensive, use pecan oil sparingly—say, to sauté chicken cutlets. Or try the oil in your favorite corn muffin or cornbread recipe.

### Hazelnut oil

**THE TASTE** The toasty, almost smoky flavor is especially intense in roasted versions.

**BEST FOR** Vinaigrette salad dressings and finishing drizzles. And it adds a whole new flavor dimension to simply broiled or grilled fish.

**TRY THIS!** Huck drizzles hazelnut oil on roasted parsnip soup at her café. "It does wonders for roasted vegetables like asparagus and cauliflower, too," she says. "It brings out their sweetness, just as roasting does."

### Coconut oil

**THE TASTE** It has a rich, faintly coconut flavor.

**BEST FOR** Sautéing, roasting, and baking. It's great for sweet and savory dishes. Unlike the other oils shown here, it's solid at room temperature. You can use it in place of butter or shortening in a piecrust, or use it to make popcorn. But eat this one in moderation; it's high in saturated fat.

**TRY THIS!** Use coconut oil instead of butter to scramble eggs. Huck uses it to sauté greens like kale with a splash of lime and hot pepper.

### Toasted sesame oil

**THE TASTE** It has a deep peanutlike flavor; regular sesame oil has been refined and is much milder.

**BEST FOR** Finishing touches in Asian and Middle Eastern dishes. A few drops in a dipping sauce or drizzled over a stir-fry can add a nice depth of flavor.

**TRY THIS!** Drizzle on hummus for even more sesame oomph. Or toss with cooked noodles or stir-fried veggies and add a splash of soy sauce for an Asian flair.

### Walnut oil

**THE TASTE** Buy roasted oil for a flavor that reminds you of freshly roasted walnuts. Plain walnut oil has a more delicate flavor, but it's still richly nutty.

**BEST FOR** Vinaigrettes and other dressings, and some baking. Don't use it for high-heat cooking or frying because it can develop a bitter taste.

**TRY THIS!** For a subtle nutty kick, swap walnut oil for regular vegetable oil when making quick breads and muffins. It's especially tasty in applesauce or carrot quick breads.



# The un-potato chip

Are snacks made with other veggies better for you?

**S**ay you're craving a salty, crunchy snack but trying to avoid pigging out on potato chips. There are loads of alternatives made out of lentils, beans, kale, sweet potatoes, or other veggies. Is it smart to buy those instead?

We put our nutritionists and taste experts on the case to find out. And it turns out that compared with classic chips made from spuds, certain veggie and bean chips do have a slight nutritional edge. About one-third of the products in our new test were lower in calories, fat, and/or sodium, or higher

in fiber than regular potato chips. A 1-ounce serving of Lay's Classic chips, for example, has 160 calories vs. just 110 for our top chip and 170 milligrams of sodium vs. as little as 55 milligrams for other chips we recommend. But many veggie chips aren't a big improvement over potato chips. And they don't all taste great, especially if you're not keen on beans. So use our list of Smart Picks, which were winners for nutrition and taste, to help you snack smart. Also, see page 46 for an easy recipe from our test kitchen for homemade kale chips.

## Best vegetable and bean snacks

**28 TESTED**  **3 SMART PICKS** These earned the highest scores for nutrition and taste.



### CALBEE SNAPEA CRISPS ORIGINAL LIGHTLY SALTED

**Price per serving\*** 51 cents

**Chips per serving** 22

**Calories** 110

**Fat** 4.5 grams

**Protein** 5 grams

**Fiber** 4 grams

**Sodium** 66 milligrams\*\*

**Tasters' notes** This tasty combo of green peas, oil, and salt has a light and airy texture, like a cheese puff, and real pea flavor came through.



**highest  
in fiber**

### BEANITOS WHITE BEAN WITH SEA SALT CHIPS

**Price per serving** 45 cents

**Chips per serving** 10

**Calories** 140

**Fat** 7 grams

**Fiber** 6 grams

**Protein** 4 grams

**Sodium** 55 milligrams

**Tasters' notes** This chip is a crispy, crunchy, tasty blend of white-bean flavor with toasty grain undertones. Plus one serving has as much fiber as an apple.



### BEANITOS ORIGINAL BLACK BEAN WITH SEA SALT CHIPS

**Price per serving** 45 cents

**Chips per serving** 12

**Calories** 140

**Fat** 7 grams

**Fiber** 5 grams

**Protein** 4 grams

**Sodium** 55 milligrams

**Tasters' notes** If you're a black-bean fan, you'll like these crispy, crunchy chips. The flavor is a straightforward combo of bean and salt, with some nutty notes.

## runners-up

These chips just missed being top picks. Way Better Snacks lost points on taste, the others in nutrition.



**bargain buy**

### FOOD SHOULD TASTE GOOD FALAFEL TORTILLA CHIPS

**Price per serving** 33 cents

**Chips per serving** 10

**Calories** 130

**Fat** 7 grams

**Fiber** 2 grams

**Protein** 3 grams

**Sodium** 75 milligrams

**Tasters' notes** No dip needed!

This bean-and-corn-based chip is yummy on its own—with garlic, onion, and coriander seasonings, and a little heat.



### CRUNCHMASTER POPPED SEA SALT CHIPS

**Price per serving** 81 cents

**Chips per serving** 18

**Calories** 130

**Fat** 3.5 grams

**Fiber** 1 gram

**Protein** 3 grams

**Sodium** 250 milligrams

**Tasters' notes** The crackerlike

texture is sturdy for dipping, and the nice balance of edamame and rice flavors is tasty on its own.



### WAY BETTER SNACKS BLACK BEAN CORN TORTILLA CHIPS

**Price per serving** 55 cents

**Chips per serving** 11

**Calories** 130

**Fat** 6 grams

**Fiber** 3 grams

**Protein** 2 grams

**Sodium** 80 milligrams

**Tasters' notes** This very crunchy chip is way better than many we tested; it tasted more grainy and nutty than beany.



### TERRA ORIGINAL REAL VEGETABLE CHIPS SEA SALT

**Price per serving** 64 cents

**Chips per serving** 14

**Calories** 150

**Fat** 9 grams

**Fiber** 2 grams

**Protein** 1 gram

**Sodium** 115 milligrams

**Tasters' notes** Slightly

sweet, earthy, and crunchy, the sweet-potato flavor is the most identifiable in this colorful mix of real fried veggies.

## Where's Kashi?

There's a reason you don't see Kashi and other widely sold brands—including Garden of Eatin', Genisoy, Mediterranean Snacks, Popchips, and Tostitos—listed in our picks. They are among the remaining 21 veggie and legume chips that got lower combined scores in taste and nutrition. Store brands from Trader Joe's and Whole Foods also fell into that category. Certain products

were dinged for flavor and/or texture flaws, and others' low fiber and/or higher sodium content pushed down their nutrition ranking. But like all of the munchies we tested, saturated fat was negligible, all were trans-fat-free, and ingredients lists were pretty clean.



## SODIUM SURPRISES

About half of the snacks in our test qualify as low-sodium foods, which means they must have 140 or fewer milligrams per serving. But when we did some spot checking, we found that two brands had more than claimed on the Nutrition Facts label. Trader Joe's claims its Vegetable Root Chips have 35 milligrams of sodium, but all three samples we tested had higher levels. Although the top chip from Calbee, shown on the facing page, was claimed to have 50 milligrams of sodium, two of three tested samples were higher and one was lower. Still, both averaged 66 milligrams per serving, qualifying as low-sodium foods. You still have to watch your sodium. Eat more than one serving—in some cases, that's just 10 chips—and you can overdo it fast!

## THE HOT NEW CHIP

Kale is a star in the produce aisle, and now it's being made into crunchy chips. More good news: The chips are easy to make at home. Our test kitchen created the recipe below, then we pitted our homemade chips against one of the packaged brands we tested, Brad's Raw Crunchy Kale Vampire Killer. The results: Our

do-it-yourself version won in a blind taste test with 73 staffers. Slightly more than half preferred our chips or liked them as much as Brad's. (We also tested Rhythm Superfoods Kale Chips Zesty Nacho and SuperEats Kale + Chia Chips Sea Salt, but Brad's outscored those brands on nutrition and taste.)



### BRAD'S RAW CRUNCHY KALE VAMPIRE KILLER

**Serving size** 1½ cups  
**Price per serving**  
\$2.80  
**Calories** 121  
**Fat** 7 grams  
**Fiber** 2 grams  
**Sodium** 116 milligrams

VS.

### DIY KALE CHIPS

**Serving size** 1½ cups  
**Price per serving**  
39 cents  
**Calories** 70  
**Fat** 5 grams  
**Fiber** 1 gram  
**Sodium** 130 milligrams

**TASTERS' NOTES** The DIY chips are crispy and tender, with a big roasted-kale flavor. The Brad's chips had lots of dried onion and garlic flavors, and not all of the chips were crispy; some tasted bitter. The best reason to make your own: Brad's kale chips have almost twice the calories and cost seven times more per serving than our DIY recipe.



### DIY kale chips

Makes 8 cups

**½ bag (16 ounces) kale greens, washed, trimmed, cut into bite-sized pieces, and dried completely**  
**2 cloves garlic, smashed**  
**2 tablespoons olive oil**  
**¼ teaspoon salt**

1. Preheat oven to 375° F. Place garlic and oil in a small bowl and let sit for 30 minutes. Discard garlic.
2. Pile kale on two large baking sheets. Toss with olive oil, making sure to coat each leaf. Sprinkle with salt. Spread evenly on baking sheets.
3. Bake 5 minutes. Using tongs, toss kale, keeping it evenly distributed, and rotate the baking sheets to ensure even cooking. Continue baking until kale turns dark green and very crisp, about 7 to 9 minutes more. Do not overcook. Cool before serving.



## 5 surprising things about ... Broccoli

### IT'S ITALIAN!

The kind sold in most supermarkets, thick-stalked Calabrese broccoli, was developed in Calabria and popularized in the U.S. in the 1920s by Italian immigrants.

### THAT NASTY ODOR IS GOOD FOR YOU.

The smell of cooking broccoli gets its rankness from cancer-fighting sulfur compounds, says Laura B. Russell, author of "Brassicas: Cooking the World's Healthiest Vegetables" (Ten Speed Press, 2014). Roasting or grilling tames the odor; boiling makes it worse.

### AMERICANS EAT ABOUT 9 POUNDS PER PERSON EACH YEAR.

That's almost double what we ate 20 years ago.

### NUTRITION LOWDOWN\*

½ cup cooked broccoli =

- 27 calories
- 2 grams protein
- 3 grams fiber
- 84 micrograms folate
- 51 milligrams vitamin C
- 1,207 international units vitamin A

### It doesn't like the heat.

This is a great time to buy a bunch because prime growing season for broccoli is in the chillier spring and fall months.



### THE GREEN HEADS ARE CLUSTERS OF FLOWER BUDS.

They'll burst into a bouquet of yellow blooms if they're not harvested in time.

# Food news

## Tricky labels for dieters



Turns out, organic, Fair Trade, and other labels we love to look for when we shop can also make us eat more.

### All-natural, Heart-healthy, Organic, and Whole Grain

In a study by Temple Northrup, co-director of the Gulf Coast Food Project at the University of Houston, soda, chocolate cereal, corn chips, and candy were seen as healthier by participants when packages had the

above words on the label. But before you chow down on those organic potato chips, check the Nutrition Facts. Organic and natural don't mean low-cal or low-sodium!

### Socially responsible, Employee-friendly, and Fair Trade

Virtue sells. Volunteers in other studies underestimated calories, ate bigger portions, and overestimated the healthiness of cheese crackers, granola bars, and chocolate from companies with do-good reputations. Doing good feels good, but be sure to watch portions and calories or doing good could make you look bad!

### Eco-friendly or green packaging

Green labels can make low-nutrient foods seem healthier. Cornell University researchers found that candy bars with green calorie labels got higher marks for health than bars with the same calories in red or white labels. So don't let labels sway you; compare nutrition info of similar products.

## should you eat that?!

### Vertical Maple Water, \$2.99

**WHAT'S IN IT** This new entry to the bottled-water market has just one ingredient—100 percent maple water, the same stuff that's boiled down to make pancake syrup. Although it makes no health claims, the company pitches the drink as a low-cal thirst quencher and promotes its sustainable appeal. In other words, forest owners don't have to chop down trees to profit from selling maple water. An 8-ounce serving has 15 calories, 3 grams of naturally occurring sugars, and trace minerals.

**SHOPSMART SAYS** We're all for saving trees, but this water just isn't worth it. Our testers liked the flavor of regular water better than this slightly sweet drink, which has no hint of maple and is pricey.



## TASTE TEST We eat bug food

Unless you own lizards, you probably would never think of crickets as food. But those bugs were hot stuff at a recent food expo (for humans!). Cookies and snack bars with cricket flour—made of dried or roasted farm-raised bugs—are being billed as super-healthy foods. Manufacturers are making claims that cricket flour packs twice as much protein as beef, is high in heart-healthy omega-3s, and has iron, calcium, and B vitamins. We didn't test the nutritional claims of the flour, but we did make our taste testers give it a try. (Sorry, guys!)

They chomped on protein bars from Exo and Chapul, and Bitty cookies.

**Tasters' notes** None of the snacks tasted buggy, but the protein bars weren't as tasty as our top-rated cranberry nut snack bar from Kind. The chocolate chip cookies were dry and crumbly and were not very sweet, plus the coconut flavor overwhelmed the chocolate.

**Bottom line** If eating insects doesn't freak you out or maybe even intrigues you, go for it. But the snacks aren't cheap. The cookies cost 83 cents each, and the bars sell for \$2.67 each.



Jiminy crickets! Exo bar has 300 calories.



## THE TOP 10

# Health sites you can trust

**Bookmark these, so you know right where to go when symptoms strike**

**D**oing a random Internet search to gather info on a disease, drugs, or other medical concerns can quickly lead you to one of the many sketchy health sites out there. What's the harm? It might lead you to make some bad decisions about your health. Google's new health search tool should help—it's checked by doctors at the site and at the Mayo Clinic. But don't stop there. Lots of other sites have solid info, too; you just have to know where to look. That's where we come in, with our list of 10 must-bookmark health sites.

The list includes one of our own, at [ConsumerReports.org/health](http://ConsumerReports.org/health), which is loaded with info you can trust—and no ads. In addition, you can trust sites sponsored by national medical professional societies, such as the American Diabetes Association ([diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org)).

Don't raise your blood pressure by clicking on the wrong info.



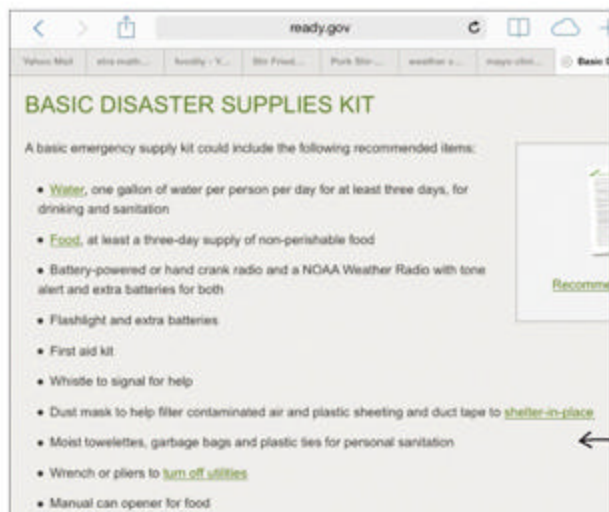
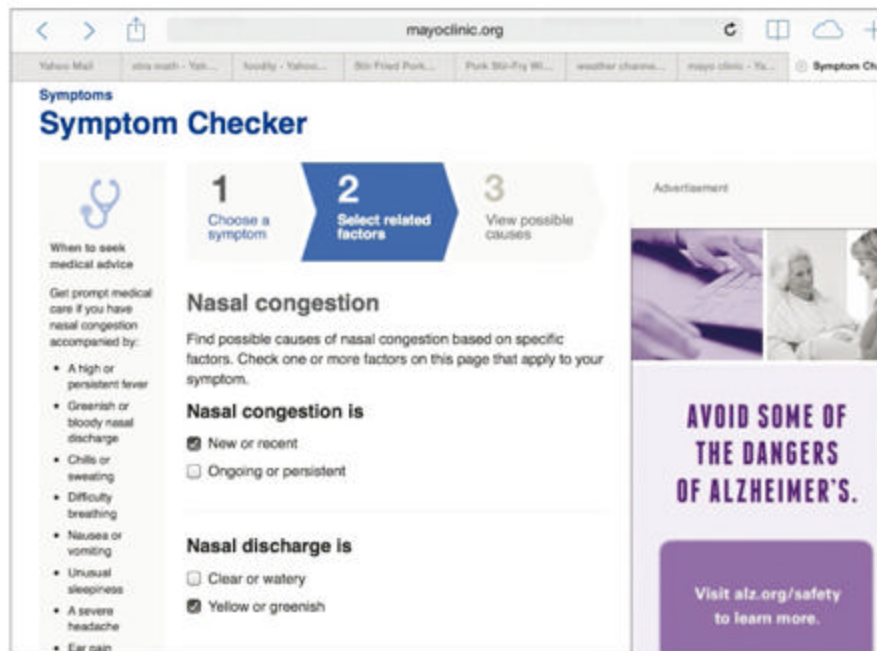


## Check your symptoms

GO-TO SITE [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org)

Sudden back pain? Plug it into the symptom checker (click Symptoms A-Z under Patient Care & Health Info) to find out what might be causing it. You'll also learn what you can do to feel better and when to see a doctor. Click around the Healthy Lifestyle section (also under Patient Care & Health Info) for info on weight loss, aging, and more. **DON'T MISS** Check out the recipes for special diets, including heart-healthy and low-sodium. To find them, click on Site Map, then Healthy Recipes.

Maybe it's just allergies, not a deadly virus!



## Prepare for the worst

GO-TO SITE [ready.gov](http://ready.gov)

This is the ultimate guide to worst-case scenarios, such as drought, earthquake, tornado, and even volcanic eruptions. (The only thing missing is plagues of locusts!) This site can tell you what to do before, during, and after a catastrophe. And it's all surprisingly simple. Get handy lists of what to stock in your home, car, even your office, under Build a Kit.

**DON'T MISS** Under Make a Plan, see instructions about special preparations for kids, seniors, and pets.

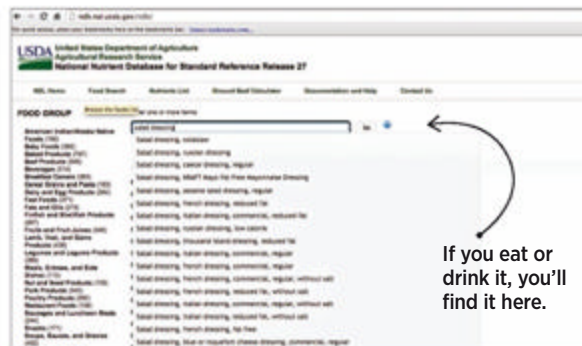
Get your kit ready before you need it!

## Count those calories

GO-TO SITE [ndb.nal.usda.gov](http://ndb.nal.usda.gov)

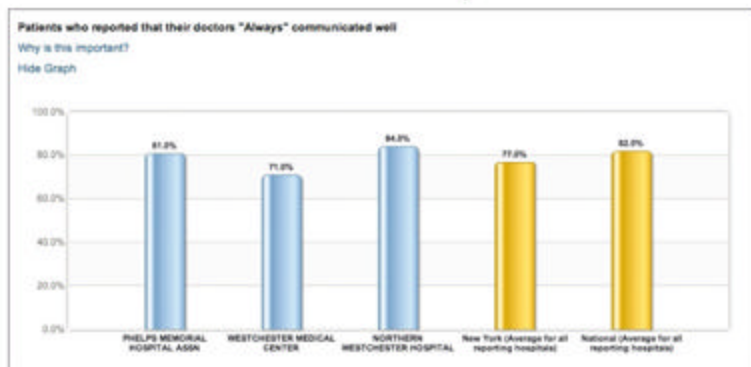
Want to know how many calories are in that hunk of Brie you just sliced for yourself? Maybe not, but if you did, you could find out at the Nutrient Data Laboratory's website. In addition to calories, you'll also find nutrient info, such as fiber, carbs, and vitamins and minerals, for more than 8,000 foods, including certain brand-name and fast-food items. The source is the Department of Agriculture, and the site isn't splashy, but its bare-bones presentation contains ultrareliable info. Begin by clicking on "Start your search here."

**DON'T MISS** If you're following a special diet—trying to eat more fiber or potassium, or cut back on sodium or carbs, for example—you can click on Nutrients List and sort by nutrient to find foods that are high (or low) in what you want (or don't).



If you eat or drink it, you'll find it here.

See how local hospitals stack up.



## Find a hospital fast

**GO-TO SITE** [hospitalcompare.hhs.gov](http://hospitalcompare.hhs.gov)

Picking a hospital for a medical procedure is a big decision. The Hospital Compare site, from the Department of Health and Human Services, lets you compare the quality of care at more than 4,000 Medicare-certified hospitals. Type in your ZIP code and you'll be able to analyze three hospitals at a time on measures such as patient satisfaction and how their death rates compare with the national average. Our sister site, at [ConsumerReports.org/hospitalratings](http://ConsumerReports.org/hospitalratings), is an even more comprehensive tool to help you find top hospitals in your area, but you'll need to subscribe to access the info. (See page 53.)

**DON'T MISS** Compare nursing homes and other facilities under Tools and Tips.

Try not to be squeamish! Tutorials can teach you about what ails you.

## Research a disease

**GO-TO SITE** [medlineplus.gov](http://medlineplus.gov)

If you want to know anything and everything about a disease, condition, or medication, you can find it at this site sponsored by the National Institutes of Health. The Health Topics section provides basic overview information in clear, easy-to-understand language. For a deeper dive into any topic, click on one of the dozens of links to outside websites. You'll also find a medical encyclopedia and medical dictionary; tutorials on common conditions, tests, and treatments; extensive information on supplements and herbs; and links to clinical trials.

**DON'T MISS** Click Videos & Cool Tools, then Understanding Medical Words for a tutorial on how to translate doctor-speak.



## HOW TO SPOT A LEGIT SITE

Before you put your trust in a site, ask three questions to tell whether it's legit.

**1. Who created it?** Look for sites that end in .gov, .edu, or .org, or from a major hospital such as the Mayo Clinic. They are known for containing objective, credible info. But if a site is run by a company or an organization trying to sell you something, don't rely on it alone—or just skip it.

**2. Where does the info come from?** A good site discloses research, sources, and any medical advisers it relies on, including their credentials. Also look for the HONcode certificate at the bottom of the site or under About Us. It shows that the site meets standards set by the objective Health on the Net Foundation; you can also look up sites at [hon.ch](http://hon.ch).

**3. How is my privacy protected?** As a general rule, don't share your health details online. Before you reveal anything, look for a privacy policy that spells out what info the site collects and how it is used.



## Get product-safety info

**GO-TO SITE** [householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov](http://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov)

If you want to see the ingredients in the bug spray you're about to use in your kitchen, as well as what to do if it gets in your eyes, who makes it, and the phone number to contact the manufacturer, the Household Products Database gives you the 411. There are several ways to navigate: You can browse by category, such as auto, personal-care, or pet-care products, or just plug in the name of the item you want to learn about.

**DON'T MISS** In the Health Effects section you can type in an ailment—headache, for example—and get info about all of the products that can cause it.

You might be surprised to learn what's really in that bottle.



## Demystify menopause

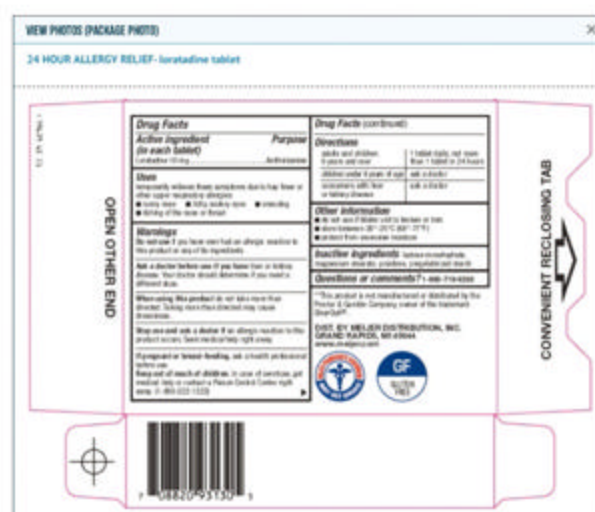
**GO-TO SITE** [menopause.org](http://menopause.org)

This site, from the North American Menopause Society, is all about helping women navigate that life stage. Under the For Women tab, click on Expert Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About Menopause. If you've thought it, they probably have an answer. That goes for younger women who are curious about perimenopause, too.

**DON'T MISS** See Related Websites, also under the For Women tab, for reliable info on other health topics.

Don't worry if you threw out the box; get your Drug Facts here.

Got questions? This site has answers.



## Learn more about the drugs you take

**GO-TO SITE** [daily.med.nlm.nih.gov](http://daily.med.nlm.nih.gov)

Wondering about the side effects of a prescription medicine? Just plug the name—brand or generic—into the DailyMed search tool and see everything that's on the insert, including what the drug is used for and any warnings. You can find labels for certain over-the-counter drugs, too, handy if the fine print is too small to read without a magnifying glass.

**DON'T MISS** To make sure your pharmacist gave you the right pills (they sometimes make mistakes), click on the Tablet/Capsule ID Tool and search for the drug name.

Get some customized advice here.

## Make better choices

**GO-TO SITE** [healthfinder.gov](http://healthfinder.gov)

If you are relatively healthy and trying to stay that way, or if you want to take better care of yourself, it's worth spending some time at Healthfinder.gov. Start by browsing the list of health topics, whether you have a specific health goal or concern or not. For example, you can learn about steps to take to prevent various diseases, get advice about screening tests, and even find tips for safe bike riding.

**DON'T MISS** Click on myhealthfinder, where you can plug in your age and gender and get recommendations for preventive services to consider, based on guidelines from various government agencies.



You can count on our experts' unbiased advice.

## Pick the right drugs

**GO-TO SITE** [ConsumerReports.org/health](http://ConsumerReports.org/health)

We couldn't find a better tool for researching drugs than our own, which recommends meds based on effectiveness, safety, and price. Our site also offers some doctor and insurance ratings, our take on the latest health news, and a lot more. All of the info is free, except for product and hospital ratings. To get those, you'll need to subscribe (\$6.95 per month or \$30 per year).

**DON'T MISS** If you're pregnant, or hoping to be, check out "What to reject when you're expecting." (Go to [ConsumerReports.org/maternity](http://ConsumerReports.org/maternity).) Also learn about medical tests you might want to skip at [ConsumerHealthChoices.org](http://ConsumerHealthChoices.org) (see page 57 for our report on radiation tests, too!).

## What about health apps?

Some of the 10 sites listed here have apps, so you can access their information on phones and tablets. Many big health authorities, such as the American Heart Association, and national drugstore chains also offer helpful apps. (Turn the page to find out more about store apps that help you do things like track your prescriptions and save money when you shop.) Some doctors are even using "prescribing" apps that work with patient portals, where you can log on and see your lab results, get instructions, and report your blood pressure, weight, and other health information. Those are all smart innovations. But be leery of apps that are claimed to fulfill a medical function, such as diagnosing a problem or otherwise replacing a doctor visit. Here are three new apps to check out:



### HDSCORES

See results of health inspections of restaurants and food stores.

**Works on** Apple; free.



### MY HEALTH CARE WISHES PRO

Store your advance directive, which captures your

preferences should you become very sick or incapacitated, or that of family members. It's from the American Bar Association's Commission on Law and Aging.

**Works on** Android, Apple; \$3.99.



### ZOCDOK

Find a local doctor or dentist, read user reviews, and book appointments.

**Works on** Android, Apple, BlackBerry; free.



# Don't miss these drugstore deals

New pharmacy programs that pay bigger rewards—and inspire you to get healthy, too

**Y**our local pharmacist may not know you by name, but your drugstore-loyalty program knows all about you—from the vitamins you take to your fondness for trying new nail polish colors. In addition to giving you discounts just for spending money, many of the programs are using that info to reward you for taking care of your health.

All of the enhanced programs are free, and it's easy to sign up at your local store or on retailers' websites. You'll earn points for filling prescriptions, getting a shingles vaccine, testing your blood pressure, or even going for a walk. (In the case of CVS and Walgreens, you'll have to sign up for their standard loyalty programs first.) Just show your card or phone app at the store to earn points.

Rack up rewards and you can cash them in to buy stuff (generally excluding some items such as alcohol, gift cards, lottery tickets, prescriptions, and certain other purchases), or put them toward health screenings, gym discounts, and other perks. Details vary by program, as you'll see on the facing page. Also be aware that some states don't participate, and some exclude certain prescriptions. If you're concerned about privacy, see page 56 for info on program fine print.



**PILL POWER** Earn discounts for filling prescriptions, getting shots, and more.

PHOTO: DWIGHT ESCHLIMAN/GETTY IMAGES





## CVS ExtraCare Pharmacy & Health Rewards ([cvs.com/rxrewards](http://cvs.com/rxrewards))

### How to rack up rewards

- 10 credits when you sign up and register your prescriptions.
- 1 credit every time you fill or refill a prescription, or 3 credits for 90-day prescriptions.
- 3 credits for adding prescription management to your account, which allows you to refill orders, view your prescription history, see your prescription calendar, and more.
- 1 credit when you sign up for refill-reminder e-mails and prescription text alerts.
- 1 credit every time you get a flu shot or other vaccination from a CVS pharmacist.

### What you get

- 10 credits gets you \$5 in ExtraBucks Rewards to be used toward most items in the store.
- Earn up to \$50 in rewards each year.

**Bonus!** If you have diabetes, sign up for Advantage for Diabetes. You'll earn double points when you buy select products, such as monitors, test strips, and foot-care products.

**Bummers** Points aren't available to use immediately. Each time you earn 10 credits, it takes about a week for the \$5 ExtraBucks Rewards to be added to your account. Credits expire at the end of each year.



## Rite Aid Wellness+ ([riteaid.com/wellness](http://riteaid.com/wellness))

### How to rack up rewards

- 1 point for every dollar you spend on eligible purchases.
- 1 point for every dollar you spend on government-funded (i.e., Medicare and Medicaid) prescriptions.
- 25 points for every non-government-funded prescription filled.

### What you get

- 250 points, or bronze level, gets you 10 percent off Rite Aid brand products for a year, plus 10 percent off everything during one shopping trip.
- 500 points, or silver status, gets you 10 percent off everything in the store for a year plus a free wellness reward, such as a gym-membership discount, magazine subscription, or health screening.
- 1,000 points, or gold level, earns you 20 percent off store purchases for the entire year.
- Points expire at the end of each year, but if you reach bronze, silver, or gold level this year, those discounts are good through the end of next year.

**Bonus!** Wellness+ benefits also include 24/7 online access to a pharmacist. If you're 65 or older, you also get 20 percent off your purchases on the first Wednesday of each month, a free pharmacist consultation, and other benefits.

**Bummer** Unlike some other programs, you receive no rewards for getting a vaccine or tracking your blood pressure.



## Target Pharmacy Rewards ([targetpharmacyrewards.com](http://targetpharmacyrewards.com))

### How to rack up rewards

- Get a certificate in the mail when you join and fill a prescription.
- Get an additional certificate each time you fill five eligible prescriptions (excluding government-funded ones).
- Earn rewards even faster by adding up to seven guests to your account.

### What you get

- For every five eligible prescriptions, you get 5 percent off a day of shopping at Target and a promo code for 5 percent off at Target.com.

**Bonus!** Target's pharmacy app, Healthful, helps you manage prescriptions and tracks your rewards (free for Android and Apple; learn more on page 56).

**Bummers** Don't expect instant rewards. Certificates and promotional codes that get you 5 percent off are delivered by snail mail about two weeks after you earn them. Also, rewards expire 45 days after the issue date.



## Walgreens Balance Rewards for Healthy Choices ([walgreens.com/healthychoices](http://walgreens.com/healthychoices))

### How to rack up rewards

- 500 points for every prescription you fill.
- 20 points per mile when you walk, run, or cycle.
- 20 points per weigh-in.
- 20 points for getting a blood pressure or blood glucose test.
- 250 points if you sync the program with an activity tracker (Fitbit, iHealth, or Jawbone) or app (MapMyFitness, MyFitnessPal, or RunKeeper) and set and achieve a goal.
- 500 points for pledging to quit smoking and setting a date plus 20 points per day as you track your progress.

### What you get

- For every 5,000 points, you get \$5 to spend in the store or on Walgreens.com.
- AARP members get bonus-point offers and 50 points for every dollar spent on certain Walgreens products.
- Points expire after three years or if your account has been inactive for six months.

**Bonus!** Your Digital Health Advisor is an online health coach with tips on weight loss, managing stress, chronic conditions, and more.

**Bummer** There are limits on the number of points you can earn for each activity. For example, you max out at 1,000 points per month for exercising.

# Get the app!

Most of the retailers recommend that you download their app and link your loyalty card to it, so we took their advice and tried them out. Here's a rundown of health features they offer to help you schedule immunizations, set refill reminders, and more. All are free for Android and Apple.

	CVS PHARMACY	RITE AID PHARMACY	TARGET	WALGREENS
Locate nearest health clinic and browse services	✓			✓
Schedule and keep track of immunizations				✓
24/7 pharmacist chat				✓
Identify your pills	✓			
Look up drug interactions	✓			
Track health measures (steps, blood pressure, etc.)				✓
Set medication-reminder alerts		✓		✓
Refill prescription by scan	✓	✓		✓
Refill prescriptions by Rx number	✓	✓	✓	✓
View prescription status and history	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transfer prescriptions	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sign up for and manage prescription-refill reminders	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sign up for and manage prescription-status text alerts	✓	✓		✓
Manage family prescriptions	✓		✓	✓

## WHAT'S IN THE FINE PRINT?

Before you download any app or sign up for a loyalty program, be sure to check privacy policies and FAQs on the retailer's website. These drugstore programs give companies access to lots of data—your name, address, phone number, and purchase history. If you don't want to receive offers, e-mails, or text notifications, see whether you can opt out and still

participate in the program.

When you sign up, you may be asked to sign a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) authorization form. That helps them to help you manage your health information, but it may also give them permission to use or disclose your prescription info to third parties, such as billing and insurance companies, or even

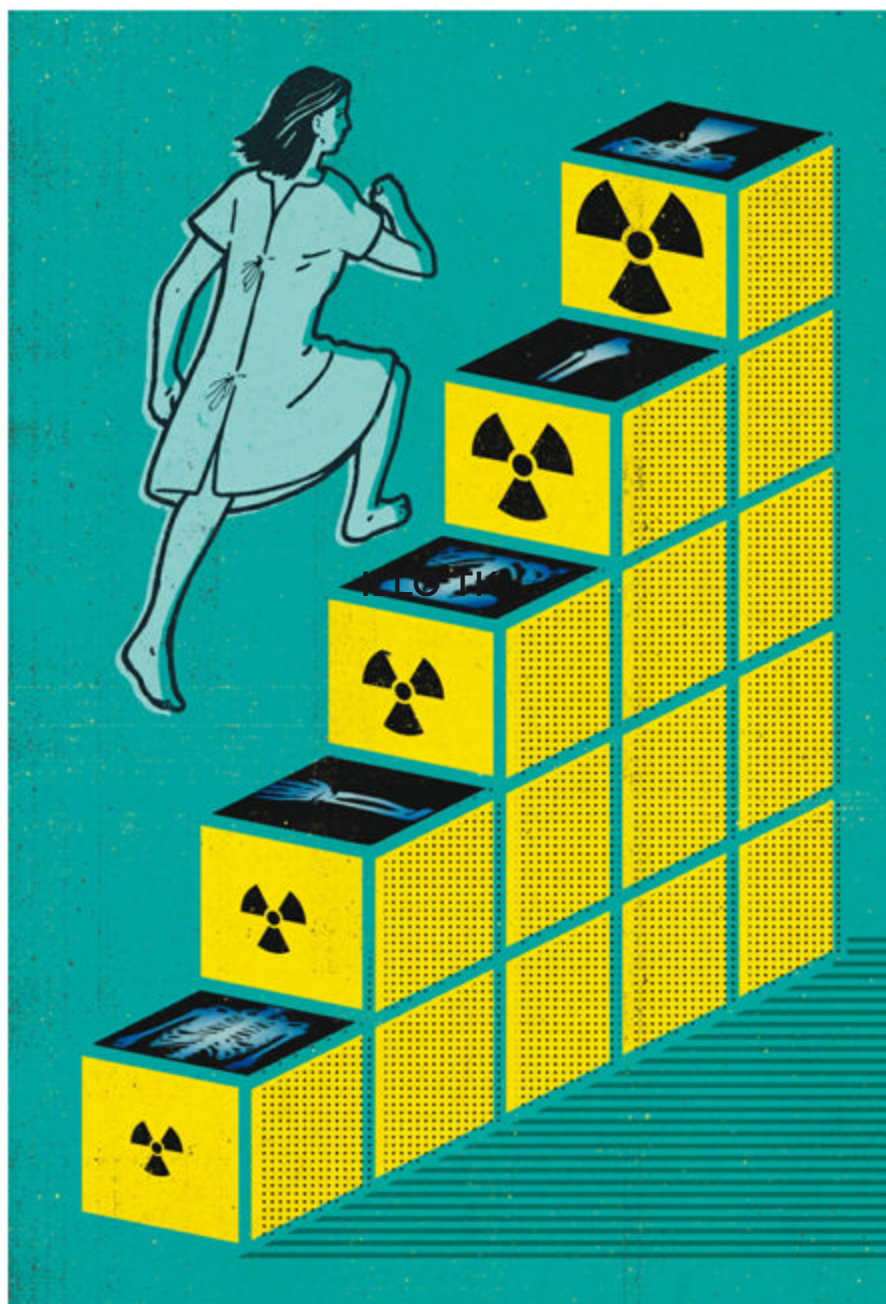
marketing companies. If you sign the form, keep a copy. If you still have questions, ask the pharmacist or call customer service.

We recommend getting a copy of your personal health record from your pharmacy. And ask for a list of companies that have access to it—it's your right! Also, privacy policies are subject to amendments and other changes, so review them periodically.



# Hidden health danger

Common tests can expose you to too much radiation and increase your cancer risk. So what's necessary and what's not?



When you have a pounding headache, do you immediately think it's a brain tumor? It's easy to fear the worst, especially when symptoms are sudden or new. And it's tempting to want a test to find out what's going on. But only a tiny percentage of headaches are caused by brain tumors. And scanning tests for head pain and other scary symptoms can expose you to radiation, which poses its own risks, especially for women.

The Institute of Medicine reviewed causes of breast cancer in 2012 and found that no product or chemical could be conclusively blamed. But the study revealed a connection to radiation-based imaging tests, particularly CT, or computed tomography, scans.

"While these represent a small proportion of all breast cancers, they're important because they can potentially be reduced," said Rebecca Smith-Bindman, M.D., director of the Radiology Outcomes Research Laboratory at the University of California, San Francisco, in an analysis of the findings. And the Institute of Medicine says that one of the most important steps women can take to reduce their breast-cancer risk is to avoid unnecessary radiation exposure.

The risk posed by a single scan

is small, but radiation's effects are cumulative, so the more exposure, the greater your odds of developing cancer at some point. The Institute of Medicine doesn't want to discourage women from getting mammograms, which are helpful in finding early-stage tumors (and emit much less radiation than CT scans). But it says that more needs to be done to keep doctors from overusing radiation-based imaging.

Here are some scary numbers: Researchers estimate that about 29,000 cancer diagnoses and 15,000 deaths per year will stem from CT scans. To reduce your risk, consider your options. In a recent survey of 1,019 Americans by the Consumer Reports National Research Center, many of them were misinformed about all of the tests used to peek into our bodies. For example, people were almost as concerned about the risk of radiation from MRIs as they were from CTs. But the truth is that MRIs don't emit any radiation.

To clear up the mysteries, here is our head-to-toe advice about many radiation-based imaging tests. They're listed from higher to lower potential exposure for an average-sized adult.

### CT angiogram (scan of the heart)

**RADIATION DOSE** **HIGH**

**WHEN TO CONSIDER IT** If your

doctor strongly suspects a pulmonary embolism—which is potentially fatal and occurs when a blood clot travels from your legs or elsewhere in your body to your lungs—then having CT angiography makes sense.

**WHEN TO SKIP IT** Some doctors use the test to help decide how to treat people at moderate risk for a heart attack; for example, determining whether they should prescribe drugs for borderline high cholesterol. But overall, the scan shouldn't be used to screen for cardiovascular disease in most people without symptoms. And high-risk patients should be treated aggressively regardless of the results of a CT angiogram.

**A SAFER ALTERNATIVE** For screening purposes, doctors can usually make an accurate diagnosis by looking at risk factors such as blood pressure and family history.

### Virtual colonoscopy

**RADIATION DOSE** **HIGH**

**WHEN TO CONSIDER IT** This scan, also known as CT colonography, is a relatively new option for patients who can't or don't want to have a regular colonoscopy.

**WHEN TO SKIP IT** Unless there's a medical reason that you can't get a regular colonoscopy, forget the virtual test. Some doctors recommend it because it doesn't involve having a tube inserted into the colon. But

it requires the same pretest prep (which can be the most unpleasant part of the procedure), and any abnormal results have to be confirmed by a regular colonoscopy anyway. And most important, it's not as accurate.

**A SAFER ALTERNATIVE** Stick with a standard colonoscopy.

### Abdominal CT scan

**RADIATION DOSE** **MODERATE**

**WHEN TO CONSIDER IT** If you have a sharp pain in your abdomen or side, it's a good way to check for appendicitis or kidney stones.

**WHEN TO SKIP IT** If an ultrasound can help your doctor diagnose the cause of your pain, try that first.

**A SAFER ALTERNATIVE** An ultrasound can save you from radiation, but it won't show much detail, especially in obese patients. So your doctor might have to order a CT chaser anyway. Also, skip combined pelvic and abdominal imaging if you can, because that raises the radiation dose to high.

### Spine CT scan

**RADIATION DOSE** **MODERATE**

**WHEN TO CONSIDER IT** If your doctor suspects that you might have cancer, nerve damage, or a spinal infection, just do it. Some red flags include a history of cancer, a fever, a recent infection, a loss of bowel or bladder control, or a loss of muscle power or feeling in your legs.

**WHEN TO SKIP IT** If you suffer from back pain, there's probably no reason to rush to have a CT scan. The discomfort often stems from muscle strain and will probably clear up on its own in a month or so.

**A SAFER ALTERNATIVE** An MRI might be a better option, especially if you're a woman of childbearing age. Lower-back scans can expose the ovaries to radiation.

## Are you getting too many scans?

One CT scan can emit about as much radiation as 200 chest X-rays. And research shows that about a third of all CT scans serve little if any medical purpose. But we get lots of them: 80 million in the U.S. per year vs. fewer than 3 million in 1980.



## Head CT scan

**RADIATION DOSE** MODERATE

**WHEN TO CONSIDER IT** Your doc may suggest this test if you've been in a car crash, fallen from a bike without a helmet, hit your head in another kind of serious accident, or had an abnormal neurological exam. Other reasons you might need a head CT include loss of consciousness, tingling on one side of the body, or loss of hearing or vision.

**WHEN TO SKIP IT** If you have migraines or tension headaches, your doctor should be able to make a diagnosis after taking your medical history and doing a neurological exam. If you're considering a CT scan for your child after she bumps her head, don't rush into it. The number of emergency-room visits for head injuries in young kids has almost doubled in the past decade, the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports. But about one-third of head scans are unneeded, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. An exam can usually help a doctor diagnose a minor concussion.

**A SAFER ALTERNATIVE** If your doctor can't confidently say what is causing your headaches, or if your symptoms worsen, you might need to get an MRI. That test is better at detecting serious causes of headaches, such as aneurysms and tumors. Another advantage: It doesn't expose you to radiation.

## Sinus CT scan

**RADIATION DOSE** LOW

**WHEN TO CONSIDER IT** If your doctor thinks you might need sinus surgery, or you suffer from frequent or chronic sinusitis, this test might be needed.

**WHEN TO SKIP IT** It's sometimes unclear whether lingering



congestion stems from allergies, a sinus infection, or something else, but a CT scan isn't likely to answer the question. So a sinus CT scan is generally unneeded.

**A SAFER ALTERNATIVE** Symptoms and medical history are usually sufficient for doctors to diagnose an infection. But a simple nasal smear, which allows doctors to analyze your white blood cells, can also help determine the cause.

## Mammogram

**RADIATION DOSE** LOW

**WHEN TO CONSIDER IT** Get one every two years starting at age 50 until you're 75. That's the advice of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, which helps set government policies on screening tests. Some doctors advise mammography more

often or encourage women to start getting them at a younger age. But the new thinking is that it can needlessly expose you to radiation. Overtesting also raises the likelihood of false alarms, which can lead to anxiety and unnecessary follow-up tests and treatments.

**WHEN TO SKIP IT** Women in their 40s or those who are 75 or older can usually skip mammograms, unless the risk of breast cancer is high because of family history or a history of other cancers. Ask your doctor whether the benefits outweigh the potential harm.

**A SAFER ALTERNATIVE** Don't get mammograms more often than needed. Also consider a new test called tomosynthesis, or 3D mammography, which emits about the same amount of radiation as a



mammogram. But it allows radiologists to view the breast in detailed slices instead of a single image, so they can zoom in on any areas in question. Just make sure you get the newest version; older versions require women to get a traditional mammogram as well.

## Chest X-ray

**RADIATION DOSE** **LOW**

**WHEN TO CONSIDER IT** If you have heart or lung disease (or related symptoms), or if you're scheduled for a procedure for your heart, lungs, or chest, you may need this test.

**WHEN TO SKIP IT** Many people automatically (and unnecessarily) get a chest X-ray to "clear" them for surgery, and some hospitals require it for almost all patients. But X-rays rarely find serious problems in low-risk people.

**A SAFER ALTERNATIVE** A careful medical history and physical exam should be enough to clear you for a surgical procedure.

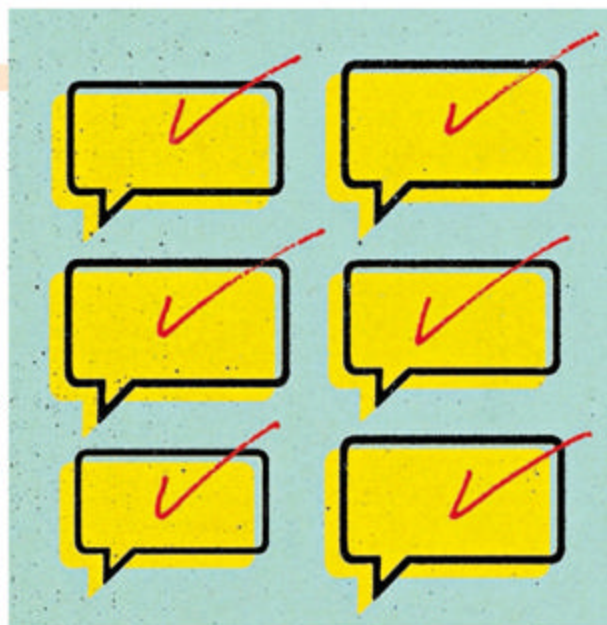
## Dental X-rays

**RADIATION DOSE** **MINIMAL**

**WHEN TO CONSIDER IT** Dentists generally recommend getting bitewing X-rays, which show the crowns of the upper and lower teeth, every 24 to 36 months. You can have a full-mouth series every 10 years or so.

**WHEN TO SKIP IT** If your dentist is pushing them more frequently, ask why. And kids usually don't need a cone-beam CT scan, which uses higher doses of radiation, before orthodontic procedures.

**A SAFER ALTERNATIVE** When you need dental X-rays, you need them. But don't get them more often than recommended unless you're having a problem.



## 6 questions to ask before your doctor orders a scan

### Why is this test necessary?

You should never refuse a test if it's needed, but often it's not. Ask why a test is being ordered, how the results will affect your treatment, and what will happen if you skip it.

### Is there a safer alternative?

Ultrasound or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which don't expose you to radiation, can sometimes be used instead.

### What can you tell me about the facility?

Ask whether the radiology facility is accredited by the American College of Radiology (a process that addresses dose and image quality, unlike some other accreditations), whether the CT technologist has credentials from the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, and whether the person interpreting the results is a board-certified radiologist or pediatric radiologist.

### Do you own a CT scanner or have a stake in a radiology clinic?

An in-office CT scanner may seem convenient, but it creates an inherent financial conflict of interest for your doctor. Studies have found that doctors who own scanners use imaging much more than those who refer patients to out-of-office radiology centers. So ask your doc whether she's referring you to an imaging center in which she has a financial interest.

### What's the right dose for me?

The smaller or thinner you are, the lower the radiation dose you need. The circumference of your chest, hips, thighs, or waist can also affect the dose.

### Is more than one scan necessary?

If you recently had an X-ray or a CT scan of the same area, ask whether your doc can use that instead. And ask for CDs of your scans for future visits.

THIS JUST IN

# Health news



Strawberries can help you get needed potassium.

## EAT THESE FOR STRONGER BONES

You know that calcium is good for your bones, but it turns out that potassium may be just as important. Here's why: A drop in hormone levels as you age often causes bone loss, and acid levels in blood can leach calcium from your skeleton, possibly weakening bones and boosting your risk of osteoporosis—even if you get plenty of calcium and vitamin D. In a decade you could lose 15 percent of your bone density as a result. But potassium—best known for regulating blood pressure and preventing muscle cramps—reduces acidity. As a result, it locks more calcium in your bones, new research has found.

Most women get just half of the 4,700 milligrams of potassium per day recommended by the Institute of Medicine. So how can you boost your intake? Eat more potassium-rich produce, says bone researcher Katherine L. Tucker, Ph.D., professor

of nutritional epidemiology at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell. The phytochemicals, antioxidants, and potassium in produce protect bones, she explains; vitamin K and magnesium help, too. Aim for five to nine servings per day of fruits and veggies, says study author Helen Lambert, Ph.D., of the University of Surrey in the U.K. (People with kidney disease should eat less potassium, though.)

High-potassium choices include spinach (840 milligrams in 1 cup, cooked), a baked potato with skin (800 milligrams), yogurt (490 milligrams per cup), strawberries (460 milligrams per cup), and broccoli (460 milligrams per cup).

Add other deep orange, yellow, and green produce rich in carotenoids; people who ate the most had higher bone mineral density at the hip and spine in another study by Tucker.

## Time it right

Working with your body clock can help you reach important health goals, according to recent research.

### The best time to ...



■ **WEIGH IN: Wednesdays.** Once-a-week checks (at least) prevented weight gain in a Cornell University study. Midweek is best because that's when your weight tends to be lowest. It's usually highest on Sundays, thanks to weekend indulging.

■ **STOP SMOKING: After you ovulate.** The urge may be lower during the second half of your cycle, when levels of estrogen and progesterone are on the upswing, according to the University of Montreal. Brain circuits involved with wanting a cigarette tend to be less active then.

■ **EAT TO AVOID TYPE 2 DIABETES: In 12 hours.** New animal studies show that eating only during a 12-hour period each day slashed the risks for weight gain and diabetes-related metabolic changes by affecting the body's clock and gene function. Set a 7 p.m. cutoff time to help curb late-night bingeing, too.

The only ultrasounds you get should be in the doctor's office.



## Skip prenatal 'portraits'

If you're pregnant, avoid commercial ultrasound studios that offer a peek at your offspring in the womb, warns the Food and Drug Administration. There's no medical benefit; they're just for keepsake purposes. Reasons to steer clear: Technicians may not be properly trained, and long or repeated scans could heat up fetal tissue or create small bubbles. It's safer to get the first images of your baby after he or she is born.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: BLUESTOCKING/GETTY IMAGES; ISTOCKPHOTO; FRAME: TETRA IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; INSET: TIM HALE/GETTY IMAGES

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## THE TOP 10

# Amazing drugstore makeup buys

Pros' favorite new products for \$20 or less

Beauty-industry insiders know that some of the best products are buried in the overstuffed makeup aisles at drugstores and big-box chains like Target. It takes a lot of trial and error to find the winners. But no one goes through more cosmetics than the pros, so we asked a panel of industry stars about their latest faves.

**YOU'VE GOT CURVE!** The brush wraps around your lashes to pump up the volume.



**MAYBELLINE NY VOLUM' EXPRESS MASCARA, THE COLOSSAL CAT EYES, GLAM BLACK, \$7.50**

### Why it's a pro fave

With its collagen formula and curved brush, you can fill out lashes with tons of volume and flare out some fabulous catlike corners, says Rachel Halsey, a professional makeup artist for television, red carpet, and private clients in Los Angeles.

**Expert trick** To get the most out of your mascara, "always curl your lashes first," Halsey advises. "Also, apply the mascara in quick strokes, from the root of the lash up and outward."

**Where to find it**  
Rite Aid





## SHEAMOISTURE ILLUMINATING POWDER, \$12

### Why it's a pro fave

"This product is great because it comes in an array of colors and has a soft, glowing finish," says Mimi Johnson, a celebrity makeup artist in Atlanta.

**Expert trick** "I love to use it as a bronzer around the hairline, cheeks, and sometimes to contour a nose," Johnson adds.

**Where to find it**  
Target



## VINCENT LONGO OLIVE OIL FIX TIP, \$20

### Why it's a pro fave

"It's the best fix for small makeup misses, like when your child knocks your elbow when you are doing lipstick or your mascara that is so amazing on your lashes is not so great on your upper eyelid," says Sheila Jordan, a New York City makeup artist.

**Expert trick** This product is great for getting the perfect cat-eye look. After lining your lids, step back from the mirror—then use the olive oil fix tip to even out the wing tips.

**Where to find it**  
Dermstore.com



## COVERGIRL BOMBHELL SHINESHADOW EYE SHADOW, \$7

### Why it's a pro fave

"The metallic pigment will brighten up your eyes when light hits your face," says Lori Depp, a celebrity makeup artist based in Los Angeles. And with six gorgeous colors, there's a hue for every skin tone.

**Expert trick** "Don't be fooled by the word 'shadow' in the name," Depp says. "You can use this as a highlighter on your cheeks or even put a tiny dab in the center of your lip to create some depth."

**Where to find it**  
Walmart



## L'ORÉAL PARIS MAGIC LUMI LIGHT INFUSING LIQUID FACIAL PRIMER, \$12.50

### Why it's a pro fave

"This is the most amazing skin luminizer I have ever used, and the only one I've seen that you can use on nearly every skin tone. Most tend to be either yellow on pale skin or white on tanned to dark skins," says Australian makeup artist Rae Morris, author of "Makeup: The Ultimate Guide" (Allen & Unwin, 2014).

**Expert trick** Morris says it's the secret to that "Victoria's Secret" glow. "You can use it directly on the skin under your foundation, or if you get slightly oily around the T-zone, use it after your foundation, on the cheek bones, eyelids, and down the center of the nose," she suggests.

**Where to find it**  
Walgreens



## E.L.F. STUDIO CREAM EYELINER, \$3

### Why it's a pro fave

This super-cheap eyeliner is the latest obsession of Brittany Gay, a New York City makeup artist who has her own makeup line. "I prefer cream since some liquids become dry and flaky by the end of the day," Gay says.

**Expert trick** Gay likes to create a defined line with this cream and set it by going over it with a black eye shadow. "That ensures a great lasting liner that will be essentially smudgeproof," she says.

**Where to find it**  
Walgreens



## COVERGIRL COLORLICIOUS LIPSTICK, \$7

### Why it's a pro fave

It won't dry out your lips, and it comes in 36 colors so that everyone can find a flattering shade, says James Cornwell, a celebrity hair designer and makeup artist.

**Expert trick** "Before using your lipstick, always exfoliate the lips and hydrate," Cornwell advises. "This gives you the best palette for your lip color to wear well."

**Where to find it**  
Walmart



## DEAD SEA ESSENTIALS BY AHAVA SOOTHING CHAMOMILE MOISTURIZING BODY OIL MIST, \$13

### Why it's a pro fave

Formulated with vitamin E, sunflower seed oil, chamomile extract, and acacia, this spray body oil is super-nourishing and easy to apply, says New York City makeup artist Maya Michelle Shapiro. "It's luxurious, with an amazing ingredient list for the price," she adds.

**Expert trick** Mist head to toe for full-body softening (no more stretching to get lotion on your back!) or rub it on specific body parts, such as your arms, shoulders, or legs, to get them glistening.

**Where to find it**  
Target



## MAYBELLINE NY EYE STUDIO COLOR TATTOO LEATHER, \$7

### Why it's a pro fave

"This product performs as well as my high-end eye shadow bases and primers," says Sarah Biggers, an Atlanta makeup artist.

**Expert trick** Place the color on the outer third of your eye and blend before adding powder on top for a dramatic and long-lasting look, or use it to line your eyes, then lightly smudge with a Q-tips for a soft, smoky eye, Biggers says.

**Where to find it** CVS



## INSTRUMENTAL BEAUTY ADVANCED CLEANSING SYSTEM, \$20

### Why it's a pro fave

"Sometimes for a big shoot I treat clients to a mini-brightening facial with this tool," says LeAura Luciano, a celebrity makeup artist and fashion stylist in New York City. "It's a compact battery-powered rotary brush for facial cleansing and exfoliation."

**Expert trick** The facial brush has ultrasoft fibers that gently cleanse pores and remove oil and makeup residue, so you can use the device to deep clean your skin morning or night, Luciano says.

**Where to find it**  
Rite Aid



# Great spring basics at L.L.Bean

When you think of L.L.Bean, you probably think of cardigans and canvas tote bags. They're perfect spring staples. Too preppy for you? If you haven't shopped the catalog—or the website—in a while, check it out. Many of the retailer's classics, including chinos and nautical tees, have been updated and given a slim modern fit in the store's Signature line. Also, L.L.Bean has made getting the right fit easy. You can narrow selections online by choosing "relaxed," "slightly fitted," "plus," "petite," and more. And don't forget to check out the nicely priced accessories. Stores are mostly in New England and Middle Atlantic states, but you can find everything shown here at [llbean.com](http://llbean.com).



\$120



Colorblocked leather lends a mod vibe.

Shown: Signature double-wrap belt, \$60.



\$60

A floaty scarf in a neutral scheme is an outfit maker.

Shown: Signature cotton-linen scarf.



This cute drawstring bag is a riff on L.L.Bean's iconic canvas tote.

Shown: Signature Somerset canvas bucket bag, \$100.

This fit-and-flare style flatters most body types.

Shown: Signature poplin dress.

## SHOPPING INFO

L.L.Bean has 19 retail stores and 10 outlet stores in the U.S. Go to [llbean.com](http://llbean.com) for locations, sales updates, and merchandise. If you shop online, shipping is free. The site has a super-generous return policy, with no time limits.



A striped tee is a smart spring staple.

Shown: Signature cotton boatneck with three-quarter sleeves, \$45.

Simple chinos look fresh in this trendy, go-with-everything color.

Shown: Signature ankle pants, \$70.

\$130



The drawstring waist creates a flattering fit.

Shown: Signature washed-twill field jacket



Pretty gingham shirts come in regular, petite, and plus sizes.

Shown: Wrinkle-resistant pinpoint Oxford shirts.

\$50



L.L.Bean updated its classic boat shoes with denim this season.

Shown: Signature washed-twill shoes.

It's waterproof inside!

Shown: Signature West Branch tote bag in Camo, \$160.



This ladylike eyelet skirt has a forgiving fit.

Shown: Fairhaven eyelet skirt, \$70.



# Get gorgeous for less

Beauty bloggers' secrets to saving on makeup and more

**B**eauty doesn't come cheap. Many of us use six or more products on our face alone—serum, moisturizer, sunscreen, primer and foundation (or BB cream), plus powder. And the costs add up fast. So we asked some of our favorite beauty bloggers for their tips on how to cut those costs without scrimping on your daily beauty routine.

## Stack your coupons

"I love to scour my favorite beauty brands' websites and social-media pages for coupons or discount codes. To maximize my coupon savings, I try to time my purchases when stores are having a sale on those specific products. Store savings plus added manufacturer savings from the coupons can result in major savings. Sometimes I end up paying less than 20 percent of the original beauty product price!"



Maeling Murphy  
NaturalChica.com

## Skip expensive mascaras

"Once a mascara is opened and used, it only lasts about three months. The longer you use mascara, the easier it is for bacteria to build up, which can potentially give you an eye infection. So paying \$20 to \$30 every three months for a high-end mascara can add up. Many drugstore mascaras are just as good, so choose a more cost-effective option."



Michelle Madhok  
SheFinds.com

## Compare prices per ounce

"Shop for skin care the way that you shop for meat or produce—by looking at the cost based on weight. Beauty products don't come in standard sizes, so calculating the price per ounce is a great reality check and helps you compare prices. For example, if you see an eye cream that is \$20 for 0.2 ounce, divide 1 by 0.2, which equals five;



Celeste Hilling  
Blog.Skin Authority.com

then multiply five by \$20 and you'll see that the product costs a whopping \$100 per ounce. Another face cream may be \$30, but if you get 0.4 ounce, that's \$75."

## Pick better polish

"Many salons use nail-polish thinners when their old polishes start to thicken with age. Thinners compromise both the color and integrity of the formula. If the bottle is less than three-quarters full, ask for a new one or choose a different color. A freshly opened bottle can make your pedicure last weeks longer than an older, and potentially thinned-out, bottle."



Jeanette Zinno  
Haute-Girls.com

## Buy double-duty beauty products

"Multipurpose products are always a money saver. Things like cheek tints can double as lip gloss, and argan oil can be used on your face, hair, and body. Try eye shadow to fill in your brows, and certain shades can be used as a blush, too."



Jami Svay  
TheBeautyfull Life.com

## Give your perfume some staying power



Amber Katz  
Rouge18.com

"Applying Vaseline underneath a spritz of fragrance helps it last much longer, cutting down on reapplications throughout the day."

## Try DIY foundation

"Liquid foundations can provide a great finish, but many have to be replaced every six months, no





## Do your own hair treatments

“You can get the same (or better!) results by using a homemade mask twice a month than you can by paying for an expensive in-salon conditioning treatment. If you want to see a true, lasting change in the shine level of your hair, try this: Apply a quality moisturizing hair mask, then wind plastic wrap around your hair.



Blair Everett  
Latest-  
Hairstyles.com

This allows the heat from your scalp to open up the hair’s cuticle and let the conditioning agents penetrate. Pick a day to do this every two weeks, say, when you are cleaning house. Leave the mask on for an extended period of time—the longer the better.”

matter how much you used. Get the liquid look while saving a bundle by mixing your own foundation. Take a dollop of your favorite daytime moisturizer and add in about a teaspoon of powder foundation. Mix well and apply. Bonus: You can easily mix custom shades for summer and winter!”



Kaylin Johnson  
KaylinsKit.com

## Get your freebies

“Always ask for samples. Then, some more. Beauty counters at major department stores are happy to give out samples of their newest products. Sephora even gives out small vials of their fragrances, which are great for travel, so you can stock up without making a purchase.”



Jeannine Morris  
BeautySweet  
Spot.com

## Don't overlook drugstore bargains

“My work with celebrity makeup artists has really opened my eyes.

Ridiculously expensive makeup is not necessary. Many lipsticks, eye shadows, and mascaras worn on the red carpet are from drugstores! So take a look around online (and turn back to page 63) to find out best sellers from different drugstore lines. I know an artist who has worked with some of the most beautiful women, and he swears by a \$5 eyeliner from the local pharmacy.”



Devin Giannoni  
PrettyPublic  
Beauty.com

## Stock up on coconut oil

“One giant jar of coconut oil (under \$20!) can do the task of a vanity’s worth of products. Coconut oil is the beauty equivalent of a Swiss army knife. You can drench your body in it head to toe—and even cook with it! There are infinite uses. Face lotion, body butter, makeup remover, shave gel, deodorant, mouthwash (oil pulling does great things for the gums!), hair mask, and even a DIY body scrub with a few teaspoons of brown sugar added in.”



Laurie Leopold  
312Beauty.com



It's cheap, 100 percent natural, and you can use it as a body butter, hair mask, and more!



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## THE TOP 10

# Best new-car deals

No other models give you more for your money!

Just because a car is affordable and practical doesn't mean it's a smart buy. To be a great deal, we think a car should also be fun and easy to drive, reliable, and fuel-efficient. And it should pamper you with nice extras.

Yes, you deserve that extra cup holder! Our auto testers and statisticians reviewed and rated more than 200 recently tested cars to find the top 10 values based on these main criteria:

- **Performance.** Our test-track experts rate cars based on how well they drive, fuel economy, comfort, convenience, and more.
- **Reliability.** Our Annual Auto Survey, based on Consumer Reports subscribers' experiences with more than 1 million vehicles, tells us which cars you can count on year after year.
- **Owner cost.** Our number crunchers tease out five-year cost estimates for all major expenses: depreciation, fuel, insurance, interest on financing, sales tax, and maintenance and repairs.

## 1. Toyota Camry Hybrid XLE

**PRICE RANGE: \$27,615 to \$31,565**

Dollar for dollar, no car gives you more. This hybrid gets almost as many mpg as the Prius—an impressive 38 mpg—however, it's smoother, quieter, quicker, and more comfortable, with the same excellent Toyota reliability. But what makes this car truly a no-brainer is its good resale value.

### BIG DEAL

The Camry Hybrid is our top value out of 200 tested car models.





## 2. Honda Accord LX four-cylinder

**PRICE RANGE: \$23,270 to \$23,725**

Think of the Accord as the midsize family sedan updated for the 21st century. It has plenty of room, responsive handling, a backup camera, and voice commands for radio and phone control. Very good reliability and resale value seal the deal. And it gets an impressive 30 mpg overall.

This sedan gets better mileage than most compact cars!

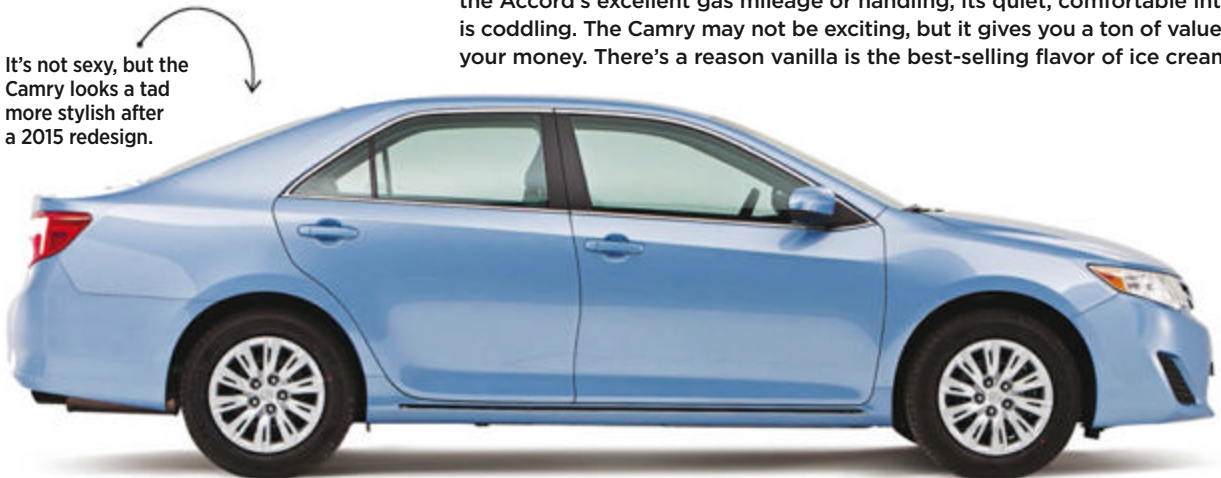


## 3. Toyota Camry LE (4-cyl.)

**PRICE RANGE: \$24,460 to \$25,375**

This basic Camry is even more reliable than the Accord. Though it can't match the Accord's excellent gas mileage or handling, its quiet, comfortable interior is coddling. The Camry may not be exciting, but it gives you a ton of value for your money. There's a reason vanilla is the best-selling flavor of ice cream!

It's not sexy, but the Camry looks a tad more stylish after a 2015 redesign.



## 4. Subaru Legacy 2.5i Premium

**PRICE RANGE: \$22,790 to \$27,590**

The Legacy will turn you into a Subaru geek if you're not one yet! Our top-rated midsize family sedan, this model is responsive and comfortable, and has easy controls. Very good reliability, good resale value, all-wheel drive, a music-streaming infotainment system, and decent fuel economy make it a great value. About the only complaint that our persnickety testers could find: Its clock is tiny. Really!



**COZY CAR** The 2015 Legacy is roomier and quieter than ever.

## 5. Subaru Forester 2.5i Premium

**PRICE RANGE:** \$25,945 to \$28,340

Boxy is brilliant when it comes to the Forester's upright styling. The shape gives it great visibility and tons of room inside. And it's one of the most fuel-efficient SUVs you can buy: It gets 26 mpg. You can get premium features such as a giant sunroof and heated seats for a lot less than with other small SUVs. And reliability is top-notch.



**GUILT-FREE GOODIES** Fun extras like a giant sunroof cost a lot less than you might expect.



### DREAM NO MORE

It's a cute sports car that you can totally justify.

## 6. Mazda MX-5 Miata Grand Touring

**PRICE RANGE:** \$24,790 to \$33,410

It's the only sports car on our list. The zippy little roadster got top scores in reliability, owner satisfaction, and accident avoidance. Toss in Bluetooth streaming, heated leather seats, and an overall 28 mpg, and it will put a smile on your face every day.

## 7. Toyota Prius Four

**PRICE RANGE:**

\$25,025 to \$31,225

The Prius gets the best gas mileage of any car that doesn't plug in. But it's no one-trick pony. As a practical hatchback, it has plenty of room inside, and it has decent ride quality. Add in impressive reliability and a great resale value, and you'll know why people love their Priuses.



You'll be in hatchback heaven!



## 8. Mazda6 Sport

**PRICE RANGE:**

**\$23,715 to \$33,095**

You don't have to sacrifice mileage for performance with this sporty midsize model. It gets 32 mpg while offering responsive handling. Navigation and phone pairing are a snap. Excellent predicted reliability and a low base price makes it one of our testers' favorites.

**ROAD RAVE** This gal looks lost! Maybe that's because she's having too much fun driving.



**COUCH ONBOARD**  
The backseat is as big as a living room sofa.

## 9. Toyota Prius V Three

**PRICE RANGE:**

**\$27,500 to \$31,750**

A Prius for families who need more room, this plus-sized hybrid has a giant backseat and more cargo space than most small SUVs. Toyota's Entune infotainment system lets you stream your favorite music. Fuel economy is almost as good as the standard Prius'.

## 10. Subaru Impreza 2.0i Premium

**PRICE RANGE: \$22,290 to \$26,885**

Yes, it's another Subaru! The practical, reliable Impreza is an awesome value. Although pricier than the competition, the Impreza provides standard all-wheel drive, a quiet interior, a roomy backseat, and a modern infotainment system. It rides like a much more expensive car, not a compact.



The Impreza is our top-rated small sedan.

# Trends you'll love

What will your next TV, phone, and computer look like?  
Hint: Thin is in—and so are curves!

After a few years of small and barely noticeable advances in phones, tablets, computers, and TVs, electronics are finally getting exciting again. At CES, aka the Consumer Electronics Show, earlier this year, our tech experts spotted a bunch of new trends that will make you want to go for upgrades. We're talking TVs with richer color than you've ever seen, laptops that are crazy thin and light, and wearable devices that are actually stylish.

Some of the new stuff we saw seems straight out of science fiction: self-balancing motorized skateboards (available now), a BMW i3 car that drives off and finds its own parking spot (still a few years away), and other surprises. (Turn to page 79 for a peek at several of the wackier things we saw.)

Our four favorite trends are listed here. We'll keep you posted as we get some of this stuff in our labs and test it out.



This Sony is thinner than a pencil!



New TVs from Samsung and other brands promise color like you've never seen before.

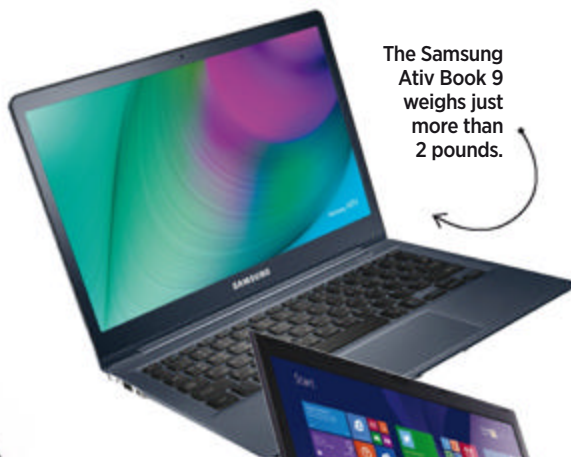
## Brighter, thinner TVs

This year you can expect ultra-high-definition TVs to get even more affordable. You can also expect the picture on many new high-end TVs to get even more vivid thanks to a technology called quantum dots: Finely tuned nanocrystals are part of a new type of backlight that creates highly precise, super-saturated colors. One big downside, though, is that there's no content to take advantage of the technology yet. TVs with quantum dots will include **Samsung's SUHD JS9500** and **LG's UF9400 series**, coming out later this year. If a slender profile is important to you, keep an eye out for **Sony's XBR-X900C**, which is slimmer than a No. 2 pencil at its thinnest part. Prices for those TVs weren't available at press time, but we don't expect them to be cheap.

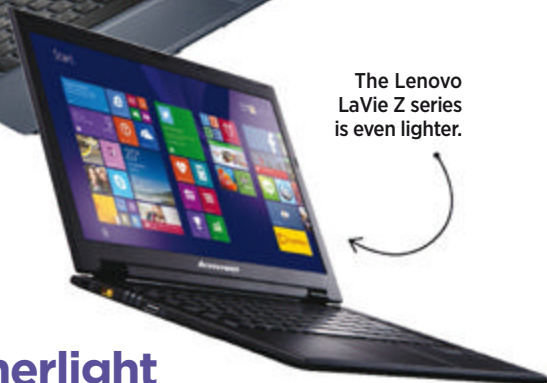




Watch out for curves on computers like this 27-inch Samsung.



The Samsung Ativ Book 9 weighs just more than 2 pounds.



The Lenovo LaVie Z series is even lighter.

## Featherlight laptops

We were convinced last year that there was simply no way to make Ultrabooks any thinner and lighter, but we were wrong! The **Samsung Ativ Book 9**, \$1,200, is just 0.46 inches thick and weighs in at 2.1 pounds. The new 13-inch **Lenovo LaVie Z series**, starting at \$1,300, is even lighter. Built with a featherweight magnesium-lithium alloy shell, it is the lightest laptop we've seen, at 1.72 pounds. Don't feel like dropping a heavy stack of bills for a lightweight laptop? Consider **Acer's Chromebook 15**, a \$250 model with a 15.6-inch display. This bare-bones computer can be configured with one of two Intel processors, a Celeron or an i3, and it promises all-day battery life, about 8 or 9 hours.

## Curvy, comfy screens

Last year we saw the first phones and TVs with curved screens. Well, it looks as if that trend isn't going away. This year, LG announced its second generation of curved phone, the **G Flex2**, (price wasn't available at press time). It's a smaller, more hand-friendly version of the original G Flex, with a better camera (now with optical image stabilization, which helps reduce blur) and a 5.5-inch OLED screen. And now you can get a curved computer, too. The **Samsung Ativ One 7**, \$1,300, is a 27-inch all-in-one PC with an ever-so-slightly curved screen, an Intel Core i5 processor, and built-in 10-watt speakers.



The LG G Flex2 is made to be pocket-friendly.

Not bad for \$250!



Finally! Look  
for the Apple  
Watch in April.



## Super-stylish wearables

Most activity trackers and smart watches have all of the aesthetic appeal of a pocket calculator strapped to your wrist. But new smart watches such as the **Apple Watch**, starting at \$350, and the **Guess Connect** series, by Martian (available later this year; price is not yet set), look as much like jewelry as technology. The new **Misfit Swarovski Shine**, starting at \$170, is a piece of jewelry. It's a Swarovski crystal with a built-in activity tracker that syncs your activity and sleep data to your phone when you tap the screen. The crystal snaps into a bracelet for work, a sport band for workouts, and a sexy pendant for a night out.

And wearable tech isn't limited to those who walk on two legs. The **Motorola Scout 5000** for dogs has a GPS tracker (so you know where Fido is), a 720p camera that can live stream over Wi-Fi to your phone (so you know what he's doing), and a speaker that allows you to talk to him through your phone (so you can tell him to stop). It's due out this summer and will cost \$200.

The Guess  
Connect looks  
like a watch but  
does lots more.



The Misfit  
Swarovski Shine is  
the most out-there  
activity tracker  
we've seen.



Keep an eye and an  
ear on your dog with  
this new pet tracker.





# Switch without a glitch

Buying a new computer? Read this first!

## OUR EXPERT



Donna Tapellini  
electronics  
editor

I love getting a new computer. I even love the part where you have to set things up. But that takes some work. Moving files and reinstalling software feels kind of like fitting old furniture into a new house. You can do it, but it's easier if you have some help. Here are four tips that can make the job easier:

### ■ NEW TOOLS CAN HELP MAKE THE SWITCH SEAMLESS.

Don't unplug anything until you save all of the documents, music, photos, and other items on your old computer on an external hard drive, USB flash drive, or cloud-storage service. Moving those files to your new computer is

simple if you're staying with the same operating system.

If you're a Microsoft person, use Windows Easy Transfer. It's built into newer versions of the operating system, or get it at [microsoft.com](http://microsoft.com). If you're a Mac user, Migration Assistant will move your files for you; it's built into newer versions of Mac OS X, or get it at [apple.com](http://apple.com). It transfers your applications, too (iPhoto or Pages, for example). Get instructions for moving your iTunes library at [support.apple.com/en-us/HT4527](http://support.apple.com/en-us/HT4527). Or if you're using a hard drive enabled for Time Machine, it will easily populate your new Mac.

### ■ YOU SHOULDN'T SWITCH SYSTEMS UNTIL YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GETTING INTO.

If you're switching from PC to Mac or the other way around, you will need new software to go with your new operating system. Also, your other hardware (printers, external drives, etc.) may not be compatible, so be sure to check. If you're still game to switch, you can use special versions of

Migration Assistant and Easy Transfer to migrate your files.

■ **YOU MAY NEED TO BUY A CD DRIVE.** Many new computers don't have one. That can make it tricky to move your software to a new computer. If you originally installed software from a CD, you'll need to hook up an external CD drive to the new machine to reinstall your software. Or you can put the CD on your old computer, copy the installer files to a flash drive, then install it on your new computer.

If you can't find your CD or you downloaded software from the Internet, a site called Magical Jelly Bean will come in handy. It offers a free program called KeyFinder that will find the product keys for applications on your old computer. With that info, you can download the software you already own.

### ■ TOSSING AN OLD COMPUTER IS A BAD IDEA.

You may want to keep the old hard drive for backup. If you want to get rid of your old machine, protect yourself by scrubbing the data using the software at [dban.org](http://dban.org) (for Macs and PCs). Once you've done all of that, it's time to boot up! Happy moving!

## IT'S A WRAP!

Microsoft and Apple tools make it quick and easy to move to a new computer.



# Tech news

## Wacky new inventions

Covering technology these days is exciting, amazing, and sometimes, well, puzzling! Here are a few products we came across recently that may never rival the iPhone in popularity—but who knows?



The **O2CHAIR** is supposed to help you breathe. That might sound weird, but the idea is that sometimes when you're stressed, you might forget to. The manufacturer, Innovzen, says that its chair "aims at increasing breathing awareness and helps users breathe slower and more deeply to be physically and mentally healthier." But the price might make you hyperventilate: \$9,500 to \$16,500!



Design and 'print' your own cookies!



The **iGROW** helmet shines laser lights onto the scalp to supposedly help hair grow back. According to the company, the device is designed for a certain type of male-pattern baldness. But the hairiest part to us is the price: \$695.



The **BLUE MAESTRO PACIFI**, \$40, is described as "the world's first smart Bluetooth pacifier." So if you want to know your baby's body temp at all times, this is the gadget for you. It has a built-in temperature sensor that sends the data to your smart phone or tablet and graphs it over time. Plus a built-in alarm helps you find it if she tosses it out of the stroller.

**XYZ PRINTING'S 3D FOOD PRINTER** uses the latest technology to print treats like cookies, chocolate, and pizza. You pop in an "ingredient capsule," then it prints out your creation. (You still have to bake it.) It's slated to go on sale later this year, but you'll have to pay up for those tasty printouts. An XYZ rep told us that the machine will cost "less than \$2,000."

## HOW LAME ARE YOUR PASSWORDS?

Every year, the password-management company SplashData publishes a list of the 25 most common online passwords. They're also the worst passwords because they're ridiculously easy to guess. No. 1 again for 2014 was "123456." Even lamer is the second most common password, which is "password." "Baseball" and "football" also made the top 10. Honestly, if you use obvious passwords like those, you're practically begging to be hacked!

### TIPS FOR MAKING YOURS TOUGH TO CRACK

- Use at least eight characters.
- Include an uppercase and a lowercase letter, at least one numeral, and special characters such as "\$."
- Don't use common words, names, or facts from your

life that someone might guess or be able to dig up (a birth date or child's name, for example).

■ Don't use the same password on more than one account. If thieves crack into one, the rest are toast!



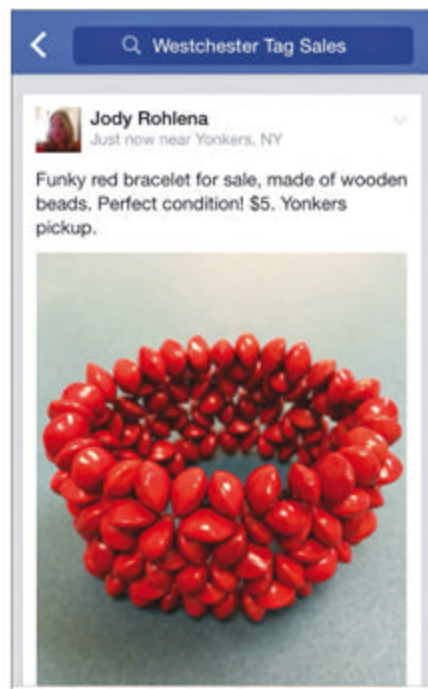
# Shop social

Score great deals using Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube, and more

**S**ocial networking apps are gearing up to be the next big thing in shopping. More and more, they're becoming a great tool for bargain hunting, browsing, and snatching up great new stuff. Here's the lowdown on how to buy and save money, as well as sell stuff using each of the major social-media platforms.



Love yard sales?  
It's easy to buy  
and sell stuff locally  
via Facebook.



## How to shop on Facebook

The same way Facebook makes it easy to connect with old and new friends, it can hook you up with people, retailers, and brands to buy and sell stuff, too.

■ **USE IT LIKE EBAY.** Virtual tag sales are huge on Facebook, the most popular social-media site. To find a group near you, just search “yard sale” or “tag sale” and your city, county, or ZIP code; local groups will pop up, and a click will show you who from your friends list is already a member. Read the “About” section to learn the posting rules; they tend to vary by group.

To buy a posted item, comment on it or message the seller. To sell an item, post a photo, the asking price, and a detailed description that includes measurements and any imperfections, as well as any relevant details, such as “must pick up by Tuesday.” Be sure to check the page often, including the “Other” folder in your FB inbox,

which is where messages from nonfriends are collected (they’re visible on computers but not on mobile devices).

We like that it is less anonymous than Craigslist; you can see photos and perhaps profiles of people you are doing business with, and FB’s built-in contact system means you don’t have to give out personal info. Plus you buy and sell locally, which eliminates wait times and shipping costs. Just be smart when dealing with people you don’t know, by meeting in a public place or taking a friend along if you’re picking up a large item from someone’s home.

■ **CLICK “BUY.”** Last July, Facebook started rolling out a “Buy” button that lets you click or tap to purchase products directly from the retailer or manufacturer right in your feed, without having to click out of FB. If you haven’t seen it yet, be on the lookout for the button in your feed.

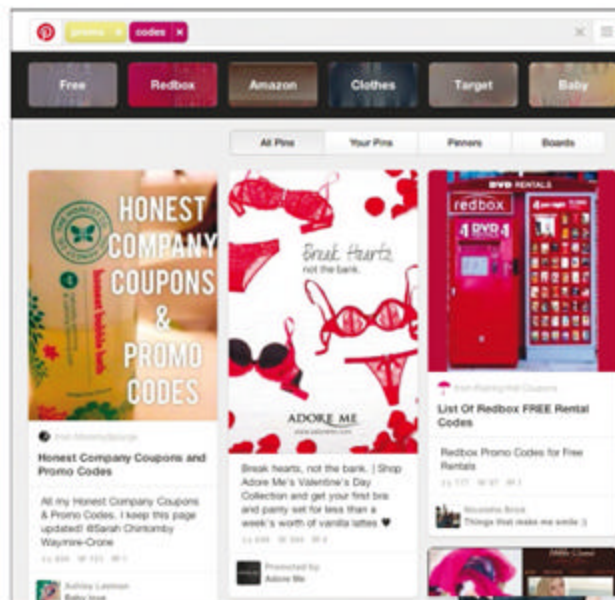
## How to shop on Pinterest

With more than 30 billion “pins” of cool stuff, Pinterest is already a great place to shop around, even if you haven’t yet clicked on any links to purchase anything.

■ **GET COUPONS.** Type “promo codes” in the search bar to discover money-saving codes posted by brands and bloggers.

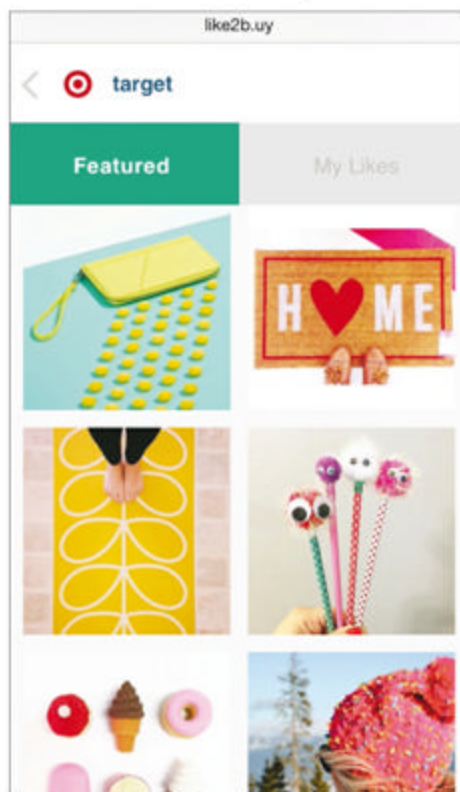
■ **USE PRODUCT PINS.** Product Pins list the price and info about items you love. Add them to one of your boards and you will get an e-mail if the price drops. Just click on the pin to view and buy the item on the retailer’s website.

■ **BUY FROM ADS.** The Promoted Pins program lets retailers pay to place ads in the form of pins, which then appear on your feed based on things you’ve previously searched or followed. Just like Product Pins, you can click Promoted Pins to connect to the retailer’s website and purchase the pictured item.



It's easy to search for and collect coupons and freebie offers.

You can't shop here yet, but some brands are getting closer.



## How to shop on Instagram

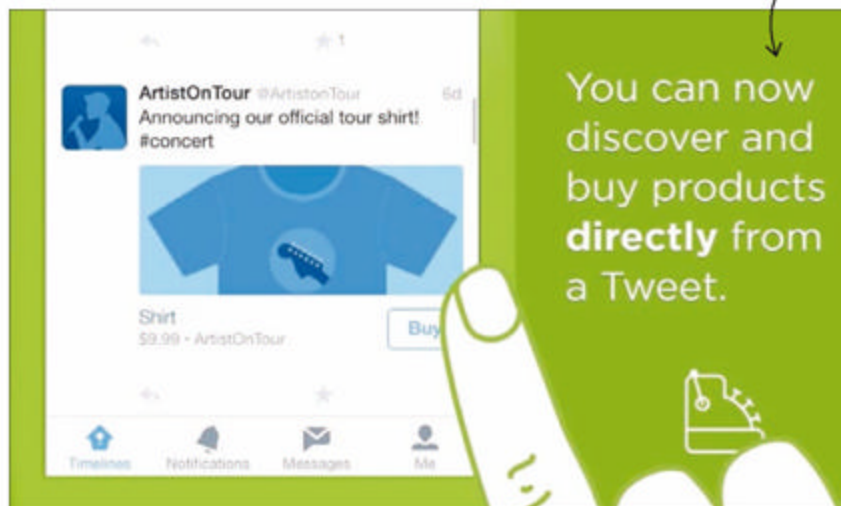
Instagram hasn't yet created tools to allow people to shop directly from its images, but users and third parties have come up with workarounds that let you snap up your new favorite things.

■ **USE APPS.** Start by following your favorite designers, brands, and stores on Instagram. Find them by entering the company name in the search bar. Then use buying services Like2Buy and LikeToKnow.It to easily purchase items. See something you like from HauteLook, Nordstrom, Target, or World Market? You can click “like2b.uy” to get a price and buy the item. Also visit LikeToKnow.It to sign up, and every time you “heart” a product

on Instagram that has one of its tags, the service e-mails a link you can use to buy it. Hervé Léger, Racked, Vogue magazine, and others use it.

■ **SEARCH HASHTAGS.** If you want to clean out your closet or score finds from someone else's, hashtags are your best bet. Search #OnlineShop, #ForSale, and #IGShop to find people with items to sell (tag your own posts accordingly). Their photos usually include pricing and product details and the seller's preferred contact method. Reach out and the seller will then e-mail a PayPal invoice to the first responder and ship your stuff upon payment.





Watch for a 'Buy' button to show up in your feed.

### How to shop on Twitter

Turns out 140 characters are all you need to score a deal.

■ **TAP "BUY."** Last September, Twitter began testing a "Buy" button that allows a small group of users (so far) to purchase items directly from tweets. Twitter promises that users will see

exclusive offers and products, all based on who they follow and what they tweet. Payment info is autosaved after the first purchase (go to your profile if you want to remove it). The program launched with 28 brands, musicians, and nonprofits, including DonorsChoose.org, Home Depot,

and Pharrell Williams. Twitter has announced that it plans to add more partners and eligible users.

■ **LINK TO AMAZON.** If you're an Amazon lover, you can shop via tweet, using the hashtag #AmazonCart. Just head to Amazon to connect your account with Twitter. Then, if you see a tweet with an Amazon product link, just reply with the hashtag. Just like that, the object of your desire will be added to your shopping cart. It works only for public accounts, though, meaning other users can not only see your posts but can also see what you add to your shopping cart. You'll get a confirmation tweet from @MyAmazon when an item is added, but you won't be charged until you head to Amazon to check out. You can also add items to your Wish List using #AmazonWishList.

### WHAT ABOUT SNAPCHAT?



You can't buy anything using this college-

student fave, but you can find special offers and product sneak peaks from brands including the food-delivery service GrubHub, the fashion retailer Karmaloop, and Taco Bell.

### How to shop on YouTube

Surprise! You can buy stuff featured in YouTube videos.

■ **CLICK "BUY NOW."** Brands can pay to offer shoppable videos, where products featured in the clips are highlighted on the screen and can be purchased by clicking the "Buy Now" button. You will then see several places where the items can be purchased, along with prices. Choose the retailer you want, and your item goes into a shopping cart.

■ **HIT THE LINKS.** Some companies have also used video annotations to point viewers to links where they can click to buy. Examples include ASOS, Juicy Couture, and Tresemmé.



# recalls & safety alerts

## Did you buy it?



### COFFEEMAKERS

**THE RECALL:** 6.6 million Keurig Mini Plus Brewing Systems sold at retailers nationwide and online from December 2009 through December 2014 for about \$100. Water can

overheat during brewing, spray out, and burn you. Keurig has had 200 reports of hot liquid escaping from the appliance, including 90 about burn-related injuries.

**IF YOU OWN ONE** Call Keurig at 844-255-7886 or go to [keurig.com](http://keurig.com) for details about a free repair for your coffeemaker. You can also ask Keurig about steps to avoid a burn injury.

### COMPUTER POWER CORDS



**THE RECALL:** 500,000 Lenovo LS-15 power cords sold with

Lenovo computers nationwide and online from February 2011 through June 2012 for \$350 to \$1,500. The cord can overheat, posing a risk of fire and burns.

**IF YOU OWN ONE** Immediately unplug the power cord and stop using it, then call Lenovo at 800-426-7378 or go to [lenovo.com](http://lenovo.com) to request a free replacement. You can continue to use the computer on battery power.



### TEALIGHT

### WAX WARMERS

**THE RECALL:** 209,000 Olympic Mountain Products tealight wax warmer sets sold at

Costco Wholesale stores nationwide from August through October 2014 for about \$20. The tealights in the warmers can burn with an erratic or high flame, posing a risk of fire and burns. Olympic Mountain Products has received 22 reports of tealights with erratic or high flames, including two involving minor burns to users and at least one involving property damage.

**IF YOU OWN ONE** Immediately stop using the wax warmer and return it to Costco for a full refund. You can call Olympic Mountain Products at 855-330-3590 or go to [myessenza.com](http://myessenza.com) for more details.



### CLEANERS

**THE RECALL:** 83,800 containers of Mean Green Cleaner & Degreaser,

both super and industrial-strength versions, sold nationwide from August to November 2014 for \$1 to \$8. The products are labeled "Does not contain ammonia," but

they may in fact have it. If ammonia is mixed with bleach or other household chemicals, irritating or toxic gases could be produced, creating a chemical hazard.

**IF YOU OWN IT** Check online at [crbrandsinc.com](http://crbrandsinc.com) to see whether your product carries the recalled UPC and date code. If it does, stop using it and return it to the retailer for a replacement.



### AUTOMOBILES

**THE RECALL:** 198,900 Subaru Impreza (model years 2008-2011), WRX and STI (2008-2014), and Forester (2009-2013)

vehicles registered in CT, DE, IL, IN, IA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT, WV, WI, and Washington, D.C., that were remedied under a recall before Dec. 23, 2014. The brake lines might corrode because of salt water splashing on them through a gap in the fuel-tank protector. Brake fluid might leak, resulting in longer distances needed to slow or stop and increasing the risk of a crash.

**IF YOU OWN ONE** Call Subaru at 800-782-2783.



About one in five ATV and ROV riders who died last year were under 16.

## IT'S OUTRAGEOUS! ATVs and ROVs kill too many kids

**THE ISSUE** Adrenaline junkies are suffering serious—and often fatal—injuries while riding high-powered all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and recreational off-highway vehicles (ROVs). ATVs resemble three- or four-wheeled motorcycles; the others look like golf carts on steroids. Manufacturers such as Polaris and Yamaha build the buggies to handle tough terrain, and they're capable of reaching speeds greater than 30 miles per hour. But speed can be dangerous. The Consumer Federation of America (CFA) reported in December that 508 riders died in crashes in 2014. Almost one in five accidents occurred with ROVs, which are more prone to tipping over than ATVs.

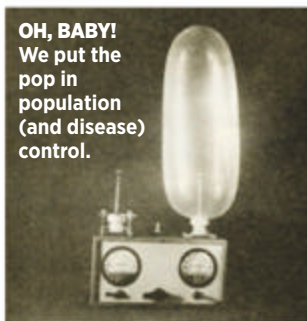
**WHAT WE THINK** We agree with the Consumer Product Safety Commission, which said that ROVs may present an "unreasonable risk of injury and death." The agency recently proposed new mandatory safety standards for them, in part to keep them from rolling over while in motion. To read the proposed rules, go to [regulations.gov](http://regulations.gov) and enter docket number CPSC-2009-0087.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO** "This new [fatality] data reinforces key safety messages that CFA has been making for many years: Do not operate ATVs or ROVs on roads—these vehicles are not toys—and do not let children operate vehicles that are too large and powerful for them to operate," says Rachel Weintraub, legislative director and general counsel for the CFA. Of the 508 ROV and ATV fatalities reported last year, more than half occurred on paved roads, not trails, and about 20 percent of those killed were younger than 16. What's more, about one in 10 was younger than 12.



# backinthe**day**

NEWS AND TIPS FROM OUR EXPERTS IN **1989**



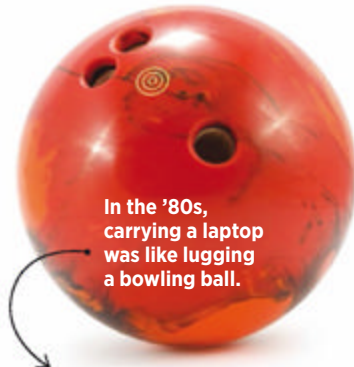
**OH, BABY!**  
We put the  
pop in  
population  
(and disease)  
control.



## What the heck is it?

No, we weren't testing party balloons. Just as the AIDS epidemic was becoming a major health crisis, we were blowing up condoms. Testers inflated them to the size of watermelons to check "breakage resistance." The best latex ones withstood double and triple the minimum pressure and volume requirements. But the strongest condoms were made from lambskin—more specifically, lamb cecum, a pouch in the

animal's large intestine. (Yikes!) They withstood more than 10 times the pressure that the typical latex condoms could handle in our airburst testing. But we warned that they were more porous and were not approved by the Food and Drug Administration for disease prevention. **FUN FACT:** Almost half of condom purchases in the U.S. at the time were made by women. Smart ladies!



In the '80s,  
carrying a laptop  
was like lugging  
a bowling ball.



## HEAVY DATA

*The Tandy 1400LT laptop above was one of the first portable computers, but it was almost 13.5 pounds. That's more than five Apple MacBook Airs—or the average weight of a ladies bowling ball. And we paid \$1,799 for it—that's the cost of two MacBook Airs today, or about 36 bowling balls!*



Answering machine  
or spy gadget?

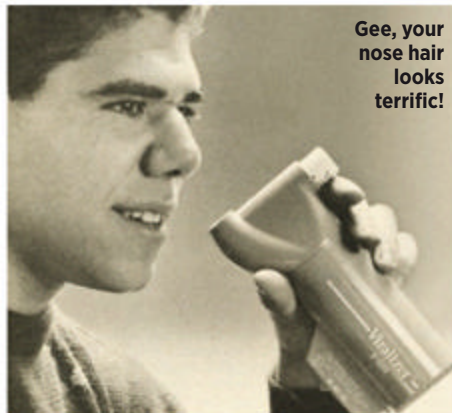
## Secret feature

*Did you know that your answering machine was possibly a snooping device? Some models, including ones from Panasonic and RadioShack, had a "room monitor" feature that allowed you to dial in to the machine and eavesdrop on the area where the device was located.*

## IDIOTIC INVENTIONS

### HOT (NASAL) AIR

The Viralizer claimed to relieve common cold symptoms by blowing "hot dry air up your nasal passages." But one study found that it actually worsened nasal congestion. And our tests showed that air emitted by the Viralizer was more than 140° F, enough to damage the cilia in the nose and dry out nasal passages. We recommended chicken soup instead. Still do.



Gee, your  
nose hair  
looks  
terrific!

## WHAT'S IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Look for us on newsstands on April 14

### Amazing cheap products

Appliances, electronics, and more that can save you big money.

### Save more at discount stores

Insider strategies to use at Target and other places you love to shop.

### The safest bargain-priced cars

The best accident protection you can buy for less than \$25,000.

**PLUS** Here's what we're testing next in our labs:

- Cars
- Mattresses
- Produce (for pesticides)
- High-resolution audio players
- Water-saving toilets
- and more

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